BARRIE MARVELL

CHARLES VINCE

Eva Douglas Wise

July 1903

Uncle Bob

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BARRIE MARVELL

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE STREET OF FACES
WAYFARERS IN ARCADY

BARRIE MARVELL

HIS DREAMS AND ADVENTURES

BY

CHARLES VINCE

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TO MY WIFE.

THIS book is yours. This boy
Was made for you out of old memories.
So everyone
Can make one boy out of the past,
In part himself, in part
What he could wish he had been—wondering
How much of each there is
When it is done.

To search through childhood thus
Is like that search for half-remembered things
When we have dreamed.
For both our childhood and our dreams,
As we remember them,
Are made fantastic by that difference
Between what each thing was
And what it seemed.

So have I tried to find
The past for you; and to this boy's small world
And wanderings
Have set as boundary those hills
Which first I saw with you.
For, from that day, those hills for me have been
The gateway into all
Delightful things.

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CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST AMBITION.

THIS was the beginning of Barrie Marvell's life. He had before this felt hunger, and been satisfied. He had felt pain, and been comforted. But of any higher discontent and craving of the mind he had known nothing. He can scarcely be said, before this, to have had a mind. This was the beginning of it. After this he could no longer take things as they came. He was conscious of mysteries. You would not call it an auspicious beginning. No one likes to set out with a failure, nor to fall at once into a distrust of himself. Yet it was so that Barrie Marvell began his life at the age of four years.

Each day, after his dinner, his mother would read to him, sitting on a low chair before the fire, while he stood beside her

watching her turn the pages, or stopping to ask who was who in the pictures. She would read to him until she grew drowsy, nodding over the book, and he would shake her arm to wake her again, showing no pity until the tale was done. But this afternoon he let her sleep.

It was not one of the tales that he knew and loved—not the thrilling tale of the wicked black cat, nor the jolly tale of the grateful beasts, nor the mournful tale of the invisible prince, nor that most delectable of all tales, the tale of the little wishing-table that was spread with whatever one wanted to eat. It was none of these, but the tale of a little boy like himself, called Jackanapes, who had tried to sit on a pond because he had seen the ducklings sitting on it.

Barrie listened without pleasure, and let his mother nod and drowse and then fall asleep unshaken. He was disappointed. For the first time a story had been read to him that he could not believe. All others he had received as tales of things that had happened somewhere, but this was incredible. That a boy, a boy as big as himself, should try to sit on a pond not knowing that he would tumble in! It was a silly tale.

He went away leaving his mother asleep over the open book. He found the other books and looked at their pictures—at the great feathered pen of the invisible prince writing by itself, at the delectable wishing-table ready spread with a chicken and a foaming glass, above all at the awful black cat with his blazing eyes, as he leapt across the tree tops with the princess on his back. He looked at these things and found reality again.

But Jackanapes.....

Next day his mother would have returned to the tale, but he shut the book up very decidedly.

"Don't you like Jackanapes?" she asked.

He shook his head.

"He was silly. Little boys can't sit on a pond."

"No, dear they can't. But he wasn't silly. He was a fine boy, and brave. He was always trying to do things."

At this Barrie only shook an obstinate head, and fetched another book, opening it at the story of the black cat.

Yet he had not got rid of Jackanapes in this summary way. That boy and his folly were still with him. They irritated him. Above

all he disliked it that his mother should admire such a boy.

He could not forget him, for there was a little pond that he passed on his walks, under the hedge in a corner of a field. Sometimes, as a special treat, he was allowed to go through the gate and throw stones into it. This pond now drew him to it with that dark attraction of things one dislikes, yet cannot pass by. He was certain that this must be the pond of that silly boy. He looked through the gate at it every day, and when he was allowed to throw stones into it, threw with a new zest.

His mother did not know that he ever thought of Jackanapes, for the book was not opened again, and Barrie never spoke of him —until one evening. He was standing by the tall French windows looking out at the big untidy garden which was his. It was his all day, but every evening there was this glass wall between them. He could not go through, but only stand on the other side and watch his garden change until he scarcely knew it. Yet what it became he did not know. For every evening he was carried away to bed just when the green trees were turning black and looked as if, in a little while—

could he but wait and see them—they would be castles with towers and spires; and lights would shine out of their windows, as they did from the houses down the road.

Most of all he watched for those evenings when the full moon came up over the great wall which ran down one side of the garden where there were no trees. He knew that if he could climb to the top of that wall he could take the moon in his hands; and often he planned to do it. For it would be a pleasant thing to touch the moon, and a glorious thing to climb that high wall. Yet he had never thought of attempting it. Between them was always that tall window through which he might not go. But on the days after the moon first appeared above the wall, there was, each evening, the happy bustle of many preparations, and he would collect all the things necessary, from a very small stool on which he proposed to climb, to a toy fish which was to witness the exploit.

So when the moon was full he lived on the brink of adventure and was happy. Was not the moon already his, and the wall already climbed?

On this evening he watched the moon come up and thought of Jackanapes—the boy who

was always trying to do things. Surely to climb the wall and touch the moon was to do something! And once that window was opened it would be so easy to do—not a silly, impossible thing, like sitting on the pond. He had never spoken before of this desire for the moon. His happiness had been to plan it all for himself. But now, with this new impulse, he would speak of it and ask for help. Mere ambition was beginning to change him.

He went to look for his mother just as she came to look for him. Already the trees in the garden were black and the rim of the moon was above the wall. She tried to take him to bed, but he would not come, and when he had struggled and been told he was naughty, he succeeded at last in saying, "I want to do things—like Jackanapes—I want to touch the moon." Then he dragged her to the window.

He felt terribly shy. Now that he had confessed, it seemed such a poor and common thing, this desire to touch the moon, a thing that any night his mother might have done, yet, to his knowledge, had never troubled to do. But at last he had told it; that he wanted to touch the moon, and that he could touch it

if only the window were opened and he allowed to climb the wall.

He thought that perhaps his mother might refuse—tell him that he must wait until he was older, or that the window could not be opened. Instead she said the one thing which he had not expected.

"No dear, it will be too high."

At that he was utterly amazed, numbed and silent, and the tears rose, for he *knew* that he could do it. And it was his mother who had said this!

She saw his face.

"You shall try," she said. "I'll lift you on to the wall." Then she added, "No, you shall climb yourself." She understood.

They went together. His mother carried with her a small ladder and Barrie followed in such triumph that he forgot the unhappy toy fish, so many times disappointed of his spectacle.

The tall windows were opened, and for the first time he went out into that strange place which by day was his own friendly and familiar garden; and felt, for the first time, the cold mysterious touch of the air of night. The moon was now standing on the wall.

His mother set the ladder against it, and with her steadying hand behind him, he climbed. He climbed—a little fearful lest he should bump his head on the moon. Never afterwards did he know such a moment, the triumph, the certainty, the hot delight of possession. There was the moon an arm's stretch above his head. He had only to put up his hand. Then he looked over the wall and the moon was miles away.

He was led back in tears and the ladder left to the distant moon. His mother tried to comfort him.

"Never mind," she said. "You tried. The rest doesn't matter very much."

But that was beyond his understanding. At four one is young enough to hate failure and to fear it; and then, although his mother did not know, it was more than failure. He had thrown away the shadow for the substance. He had possessed the moon; and now he had lost her. Never again could he plan to climb that wall and take her in his hands. For now the high wall was very low, and the moon, that once belonged to his garden, was far away.

CHAPTER II.

THE TWO PRINCESSES.

THE two Princesses hung on the wall of the landing outside the nursery, where, when the little gate at the top of the stairs was shut, Barrie Marvell could play. He liked it best on wet days, for then, outside the window of the nursery, the rain fell silently and gently into the garden; but on the landing it danced and beat urgently on the skylight as if it were determined to come in, so that to go from the quiet of the nursery to the landing was almost like going out of doors.

The two Princesses were opposite the skylight, above the stairs where only the light could touch them. They wore pale blue dresses, and had golden hair. Both looked out of the picture straight at him.

The little Princess had great grave eyes, and her lips were just open so that the next moment she might do anything, but he could not guess what. But the bigger Princess simply smiled, and looked at him very friendlily, as if she knew and liked him.

When he played in and out between the nursery and the landing he knew that the two Princesses were always there, if he needed them, as sometimes he did when he was doing fine and clever things, and wanted someone to admire them. Whatever he did the bigger Princess was always pleased, but with the other he could never tell.

He had no reason at all for thinking them to be Princesses except that, like all Princesses, they were young and beautiful and in a picture; but that they were Princesses he did not ever doubt. They were in all his games, but they sat apart. They were not altogether his companions, nor altogether an audience to his play. If he had tried he could not have said exactly what they were to him, but in losing them he would have lost something from all his games.

It was the reading of the tale of Prince Clear which was the beginning of the trage-

dy. In that tale the Prince, you will remember, had to choose between the princess with the black hair and the golden skin and the eyes like night, and the princess with the face all milk and roses, and the golden curls, and the eyes like day.

The Prince chose, and choosing right, went through many adventures, and at the end of them all lived happily ever after. It was easy for him to choose because the two Princesses were so different, but how, Barrie thought, could any Prince have chosen between the two who hung on the wall opposite the skylight—between that smile which made him happy, and those grave eyes which made him wonder. And yet he felt he ought to choose. It was a thing that every Prince must do. It was so in all the tales. There was always some great choice to make, and the true Princes were always gloriously right. He would have loved to be a Prince for the sake of so many things, for the great horses that they rode, and the great woods to which, sooner or later in their stories, they always came. But the only thing in which he might choose like a Prince—in the nursery where he lived—was between the two Princesses; and choose he

could not. If only one had been dark and the other fair!

It was very hard to know that he could not be a Prince, to know that there was no strange wood or magic castle waiting for him, no horse, no fairy sword—and all because he could not choose.

And then one morning the picture was taken away. Why it was taken and where it went he did not know, and he did not like to ask. He felt that it must be his fault that they had gone, because he had not chosen. If he had chosen then one of them might have stayed. So he kept his sorrow to himself. But for a long time that landing was too empty, and he too forlorn to play there, even when the rain was knocking on the skylight and calling to him to let it in.

He knew then for certain that he would never be a Prince, for even with the picture gone and the wall bare, he could not say which of the two Princesses he would have called back if he could—the Princess with that smile in which was such comfort and friendliness and encouragement, or the Princess with the grave eyes and opening lips who kept him always wondering what she would do.

CHAPTER III.

NIGHT WINDS.

IF it were possible for the wind to persevere along those random paths by which the chance influences of childhood often set it travelling, to what strange places might it not come? A very small thing—a story, a picture, a word misunderstood—may throw it out upon some queer track, and a child may sail far on a lonely voyage before the wind of common consciousness catches him again and blows him back to the common ways of man. Even then, the memory remains, in strange fancies and stranger fears.

So it was with Barrie Marvell. He went for years with some ideas topsy-turvy in his head by the unnoticed chance of the way in which they had first appeared to him. This was so, most of all, of that great uncharted

sea out of which all the monsters of childhood come—the darkness of the night.

His room was an attic where the great trees reached to a little above the window, and at night he would listen to the strange and beautiful sounds which the winds made moving among them, to their sudden onslaught, rising to fury and then breaking into the gentle sound as of many little feet upon the leaves, like feigned anger that turns to laughter; to their piping and calling and sad cries among the chimneys, and the falling sound of their retreat.

He never feared the noises of the night-winds, for he could remember no time when they had not been part of his sleep. Even when the full south-west gale roared and struggled round the house he never feared for more than a little, because, sooner or later, there came always that rustling laughter.

Those night-winds blew deep into his mind. They were part of sleep to him. Not until he came to take his share in the common inheritance of ideas did he understand that sleep and the winds were separate things, and that to most men it was sleep and silence which were companions. The winds

blew him to sleep and wakened him again, and on the heavy still nights of summer he would lie awake and listen for them, until some wandering breath among the leaves told him that they were somewhere near, and the strain of his listening would break and he would fall asleep.

The winds blew into his very dreams. Even when he dreamed sadly and fearfully there nearly always came, soon or late, something that was strong and good, though he never saw it. It never had any shape, but he knew that it was the wind who had come for him, and he waked to the glad relief of the sound of it among the trees.

His bed was in a corner of his attic, close under the sloping roof, and the single dormer window, looking out on the trees, was on the same side of the room, so that, as he lay, he could not see it. But always it stood wide open and the winds could enter by it, filling the room with freshness. They came very near to him, but could not reach him under his sheltering roof. He would lie there, listening as they played in full course across the lower end of his bed, until the room itself would seem to stir gently and the pictures would move on the walls.

Sometimes in the morning he would find leaves that had blown in, and once when a sudden storm had come in the night, the uncarpeted floor by the window was all glistening-wet with rain. He turned that window at once into a harbour. He brought his boats from the wooden box in which they lived with his other toys, and moored them to the end of the curtain. It was his great hope then that he would wake one morning and find them all afloat. This never happened, but sometimes he found them with their decks wet, and knew that while he slept they had been a-sailing. By day they lay at anchor, but the last thing each evening before he went to bed he would unmoor them and set them ready for their mysterious voyages of the night.

Such a room, where the winds came hurrying in across the trees, and the window was a harbour opening on unknown seas, could hold only delight. Often he would live through the long afternoon longing for the night to come with its great satisfying winds.

He would spend hours making ready for the night, collecting all the books and toys which he wanted for companions and storing

them away in a box underneath his bed. There was an elephant. There was a box of bricks. There was Grimm's Tales, with the picture of the wishing-table, which, as one ate, was to turn bread into cake, and rice-puddings into jellies. There was a shell, large as a saucer, and as richly coloured as the evening skies, which he knew had come from thousands of miles across the seas. These there were, and others, but these were the essential things—companionship, shelter and defence, food and drink, and the promise that there really were those seas across which his little ships would sail when the wind and the rain blew in. He could not have explained it, but that shell was like a compass and chart to him.

Then he would wait, watching the trees and the sky and the garden change— wait until he was told that it was time for bed, and go up to that twilight attic, where he felt the coolness of the night—like a sudden breath of romance—as he opened the door and heard the rustling of the leaves.

It held only delight, that attic, except for one thing. In the darkness it was familiar. When the winds blew he loved it. But when across the ends of his bed came the moon-

light, he was afraid. Most of all he was afraid on the still nights when the winds had gone away and all the leaves were asleep. Then that light would fall in a great square upon the wall as if the wall had opened. He knew that the sides of the square were black curtains; for once, when the wind was cheerful and friendly outside and he had not much feared the moonlight, he had sat up and seen the black sides of the square moving as curtains moved in the wind, though they made no noise.

There was no time that he could remember when he was not afraid of that pale light on the wall, yet, like all such fears, it had begun from a very simple thing.

It had begun downstairs in the study, a little room with books right up to the ceiling, where he would wander round the shelves looking for pictures. There were just four shelves to which he could reach. To the fifth he sometimes climbed on a stool. On the sixth he knew that some day he would find all the pictures that he desired.

Some of the books on these lowest shelves were too big for him. Many and many a time he wrestled fiercely with Liddell and Scott and Lewis and Short, confident that

there were splendid pictures inside, but they were too massive and too firmly fitted in their places. Other books were not so difficult, and chief among them all were two fat brown volumes that he knew familiarly long before he could read 'Darkest Africa' in their gilt lettering. But they held no darkness for him. They were full of pictures, inexhaustible. He never came to the end of them. There were always new journeys to make in those two books and new things to find, great rivers with strange boats, fierce battles and amazing dances, little mud houses such as he might have made in his own garden, and tiny black men who seemed scarcely bigger than himself, creeping through dark forests more wonderful and terrible than all the forests of the fairy tales. There was no fear in any of these things, but only delight.

Then one day, among those shelves, he found fear. It was not a book like 'Darkest Africa' for it had only three or four pictures. But these were beautiful—tall women in flowing dresses, with great horned headdresses and linen swathed round their cheeks, a man on horseback galloping

through a wood, and a little ship full of men in armour. He looked through and through it to be sure that he had not missed any, and then he found one which was not gay and beautiful like the others. It was the picture of a great empty room, so dark that he had to look very closely into it, and even then he could not be sure of what was there. It was very high with no ceiling at all but great rafters. Its floor was of stone and its walls were covered with heavy curtains. It seemed to have no windows, but from a narrow slit, high up in the room, the moonlight fell in one straight white beam on the curtained wall, and on the figure of a man. He must just have stepped through the great curtain, for one hand still held it open, while the other gripped the cloak that he wore. He waited there and either he listened or else he was looking at something in the distant and dark corners of the empty room. But whether he listened or looked he had an evil face, the face of a man who had found something horrible and liked it. There he stood half hidden by the curtain folds. His face, under a flat black cap was clear and white and wicked in the moonlight. Barrie looked and looked until he longed for the curtain to

fall and hide the man. He went back to the other pictures, to the ship with its sail full of the wind, and to the horseman flying through the trees, but now, turn the pages as he would, he could not miss the picture of the room, and he could not help looking at it to see if the face were still there. He put the book away at last, but the face haunted him.

He went back for the book next day, but it was gone. It must have been moved to some other shelf and was now utterly lost to him among the great unknown crowd of books on those shelves beyond his reach. He did not know whether to be glad or sorry, but he longed to see the room just once, with the curtain fallen into its place again and the face hidden.

One night, when he had gone to sleep to the sound of the wind, he waked in complete silence. The moonlight was in the room, making its great pale window on the wall, and for one terrible moment as he waked he thought that he was in the room in the picture. Then he felt his familiar, comforting bed and knew where he was, but still he sat huddled and fearful, staring at the moonlight window, wondering if the black curtain

beside it would be drawn away and the face look out.

From that time he feared the moonlight in his room, except when the wind blew. Then when he heard it calling outside, and the gentle laughter of the leaves answering it, he was not afraid. For he knew that the winds were trying to blow the moon out, as he had seen them blow out a candle. He would sit in bed and watch the battle on the wall between the moonlight and his winds—the moonlight coming and then going as if the winds kept blowing the black curtains together on the wall to shut it out. On such nights he knew that no face could look out at him. He knew that the man no longer stood listening or looking in the silent room, but was running, with his great cloak blown about his evil face—running with the wind behind him.

CHAPTER IV.

THE THREE PICTURES.

THERE was a little room to which no one ever went except Barrie. It was always cold and dark, for it faced to the north, and outside its window grew a fir tree so that the sun could never find its way in. It had always the chill, inhospitable smell of rooms that are furnished and ready, but never used.

To this room Barrie came for the sake of three pictures—three faces, hanging on the wall side by side. Two were faces of women, and between them was the face of a man. Barrie came to look at them because they were altogether unlike any faces that he knew.

One of the women had many little ripples of hair that came down over the sides of a

high forehead until they touched the corners of her eyebrows and her cheeks. Beneath the ripples was a round and gentle face with two great eyes and a mouth that was neither a baby's nor a woman's—the queerest, most adorable little face. Far back on her head she wore what might have been a sunbonnet, such as Barrie saw the women wearing when they worked in the fields. It covered her ears behind the ripples of her hair and was tied beneath her chin. But it was far finer than any sunbonnet for its edges were pearls. There were pearls round her neck, and a great jewel hung on her breast. Her sleeves had a pattern of roses, and in her little plump hands she held some strange instrument which was all circles.

Barrie thought that it must be an egg-whisk, but certainly it was no ordinary egg-whisk. It was such a one as might be used in a king's kitchen, just as that sunbonnet was such as a queen might wear. He wondered if perhaps this was that queen in the verses who sat in her parlour eating bread and honey. He imagined her slipping into the kitchen when the maid was in the garden hanging out the clothes—slipping in when it was empty to set those wheels whirring.

and to watch the eggs come up in creamy foam.

Because of these familiar things which yet were also strange—the beautiful egg-whisk and the sunbonnet all jewels, and the queen with the face of a little girl—Barrie loved that picture. He often climbed on a chair to examine the egg-whisk, but though one of the Queen's plump fingers was pointing at it as if she would show it to him, he could never discover how it worked.

The other woman did not look into the room at all. She turned the side of her face to him. Her nose was very long, and her forehead went back to the middle of her head. It made her seem to despise what would make her beautiful. Yet she also was strangely and richly dressed. Her hair was held by a band that hid her ears and on top of it was a little pyramid of jewels. She wore a dark necklace tight about her throat, and on her great puffed sleeve was a pattern like three black demon-hands, each with twelve jointless fingers on a lean wrist, stretching up to seize her uncovered shoulder. Her face was full of a serene disdain, but whether the disdain was in her eyes or on her lips or in the length of her nose or that only

she never looked into the room it was very hard to tell.

It was not a face with which one could be friendly; yet, even then, Barrie knew that there was something in that face more wonderful than anything in the picture of the baby queen, more wonderful than jewelled sunbonnets or the strange egg-whisk. He knew that if that calm, disdainful face turned and looked into the room and spoke to him, he would do whatever she asked.

The man who hung in the middle had a dark coat buttoned up to his throat, and a dark hat on his head, a curious, twisted hat. Between the dark hat and coat his face was very white. It was a hard unfriendly face with deep puckers at each corner of the mouth and eyes that looked at Barrie as if they suspected him. Wherever in the room he stood, those searching eyes were asking him what he had done. He would have disliked that picture but for a strange, delightful thing which one day he found in it.

That day, about eleven o'clock, the hour when the morning begins to seem so very long, Barrie went to the little room with two biscuits and the Arabian Nights. The biscuits were very dry and dull, so he turned

to the tale of the little prince who was given more cheese cakes than he could eat.

When one was hungry there was such a delightful improbability about this tale that it could give a flavour even to a dry biscuit. So he ate and looked at the picture of the little prince. Then when the biscuits were done, he wandered on through the glowing coloured pictures of the book until he came to the one of Aladdin when the genie appeared to him for the first time and he stood in amazement with the lamp in his hand.

Barrie was sitting on the floor beneath the window and he looked up at the man in the twisted hat to see if he were looking—and the man in the twisted hat was gone!

Instead the picture frame was filled with a grey light, and a dark, and shadowy tree like the tree outside the window of the little room. Then he moved again, and the white face with the puckered mouth and the suspicious eyes was back in the frame.

There was no doubt of it, that frame held two pictures—the face of the man and the shadowy tree; and Barrie could make the face come and go as he willed.

He too, had found a genie, but he was more fortunate than Aladdin, for he had no lamp

to lose. He had only to move his head as he sat there by the window, to summon the genie to him or send him away. By a nod he had turned that little room into an Eastern Palace. What feasts he ate sitting by the window! He would go to it each morning with his biscuits, or an apple or a crust of bread and straightway transform them into all the foods on forbidden larder shelves and all the foods in all the books that he knew. He would feast there with the queen of the egg-whisk who looked across at him from the wall, bidding the genie bring her bread and honey—the bread cut so thin that it was as sweet and golden with honey on the bottom as on the top, and eggs also, floating in little china bowls, all ready for her whisk. His own plate was piled high with sardines and raspberry jam, with mangoes and bread fruit and plum-cake, with trifles buried deep in whipped cream, with ship's biscuit and jellies, with fried turtle and macaroons, with chocolates and green cocoanuts, salt pork and turkish delight. So he sat, nibbling his dry biscuit or biting at his hard crust, and filled his stomach with dreams.

Then, one day, he grew tired of this eastern luxury and feasting.

It was a northern day, with a great, gusty wind, with rain that beat noisily on the windows, and very clear times of sunshine when the wind seemed to blow a new and fine light into that dark room and into the three faces on the wall. It was one of those days when the spirit of the outside world enters the shelter of the house, when the shadows and sunlight fly in and out of the rooms, just as they follow one another across the fields; when fires burn more brightly, and the boisterous wind waits at the doors ready to come bursting through. It was a day to be beating a drum in the passages or falling on the furniture with swords.

The wind came full against the window of the little room, and with a sudden gust the rain broke and streamed on its panes until Barrie could not see out. At such times the tree in the picture had almost gone and there was nothing but a coloured shadow as of a forest full of mists. Then the rain would pass and the wind fall, and a golden, clear light come in. It was no day to feast in idleness with a genie to wait on one, no day for pretty queens eating bread and honey.

Barrie sat astride a chair and watched the coming of the rain and the flowing water on

the window panes. All the world outside was going at a gallop, the great tree tops, the sunshine and the rain; and before he knew it, he found that he was going at a gallop, too.

Like all great games, it came unplanned. Suddenly he was in the middle of it. Sometimes he went through quiet sunshine, by level roads, among still trees ; and then across grey lands of flying mists or swaying forests, where he bent above his horse's head; sometimes, when the rain came pouring down the window-panes, he struggled through deep streams, and came up from them, wet but triumphant, into the sunshine. So, as the day changed and changed again, he crossed half a world, riding behind that window.

Whenever he reached a town, as he did when the sun came out, he dismounted to add to his equipment. At one town he got himself a sword, at another a cloak and at another he went to the kitchen for a dry crust—the one food to which he was allowed to help himself at any time of the day. This day the crust needed no genie to change it. Eaten as a crust in the saddle, it tasted far better than when it had been served as

cheese-cakes and Turkish delight on a golden plate.

With sword, crust and cloak, Barrie rode on through a golden, still afternoon watching for the clouds to bring adventures. But the sky was clear, the window dry, the winds had gone. He grew tired of this easy travelling and turned his horse. There, before him, was the white face of the man with his searching suspicious eyes.

Barrie put hand to sword and quickened his pace. Next moment the face had gone and he rode looking at the tree in the grey light. He rode through a misty forest of such trees, going very cautiously, for at any moment he might come suddenly on that face again.

He could see before him the serene, disdainful face of the queen who never looked into the room. It was for her and to her that he rode, but he could not reach her. Whenever he came nearer to her he was out of the shelter of the forest, and the man with the searching eyes, his enemy and hers, was watching him. He must come to her unseen. So he turned once more into the forest and rode on wondering what he should do. If only he had with him all his mounted soldiers

—above all, that regiment of lancers with their lances lowered who went always at the charge! But it was too late to fetch them now. He must ride alone.

Then the room grew suddenly dark and he looked through the window behind him to see that the trees were swaying and the wind had brought up great dark clouds. It was their shadow which had fallen on the room.

So, with the darkness of the wind and rain, the end of the day came suddenly and before its time, and with it the end came also of his great ride. He could hear the fierce wind in the trees, the window shook with it, and the panes suddenly ran with many streams. The tree in the picture was now no more than a blur of mist. He pulled his cloak round him and gripped his sword. He must reach the queen now or it would be too late.

Out of the forest he rode. There was the white face of their enemy; and the searching eyes never left him. But beyond that face was the queen. Even now she never looked into the room. He could see her serene profile with her eyes turned still towards other things. So he rode, faster and faster, as the sound of the wind and the rain rose furiously behind him.

How it happened, he never knew. He was off his horse ; his cloak had dropped ; he was across the dark room ; his sword was waving ; he had nearly reached the queen. Then there was a crash and his sword fell to the floor among the fragments of glass from the picture of the man.

Barrie jumped back to the window, but the face was still there, whiter than it had ever been before, and the eyes seemed now to be full of anger.

His forest where he had ridden in safety was gone. However he moved he could not find it; but always the white face was clear, and the eyes followed him. With that—wondering what had happened, not knowing that in the last exultant moment his sword had broken the magic glass—he ran in sudden fear from the dark room.

CHAPTER V.

THE SEARCH.

ALL children seem to live through all the ages of the world before they grow up and join their own. There are some who never really join it, and the rest bring more or less of those other ages with them. Some bring scarcely anything, others a great deal; and this is one of the chief things by which men and women are different from one another.

For a long time all children seem to live in the Middle Ages—in a world like those old pictures where there are no distances; where strange things, good and wicked, beautiful and ugly, are near to one all the time; where wildest, most fantastic things have a definite shape; where the sky nearly touches the earth, and heaven and hell are no further away than the next town.

Little by little the world grows bigger and bigger, and the clear shapes disappear. The

dragons dissolve into clouds, and the wind carries them away. The stars are no longer lamps just out of reach in the roof of the world, and to that little, clear, brightly-coloured place, mists and distance and doubts blow in.

The world began to grow bigger for Barrie Marvell when he tried to touch the moon, and she suddenly jumped from the top of his wall, miles away. But for long afterwards it still remained a little and clear world, always within sight, and nearly within the reach of his hand. All the people in all the tales that were read to him, and in all pictures that he saw, were in that world, just round the corner. There they lived their lives and fought their battles and sailed their ships—the Black Cat and the Brave Little Tailor, the White Rabbit and Long John Silver. But there was always a corner to turn, and as the world grew bigger that corner was always a little further away.

For a long time that corner was the corner of the grey wall of his garden, with the beech trees, stretching their great arms above it. He would stand at the gates in the evening and look along that tempting road, for it was

then that he could see most clearly where it turned the corner of the wall into the world beyond. His own house and garden were already grey and cold with the night, but over the great black shadows of the trees, which lay like a barrier across the road, he could see that the sun still shone in the world round the corner. It seemed to be still only tea-time there when already it was bed-time with him. That turn of the road into the evening sunshine was, for a long time, the corner of romance.

And then, one evening, when the world round the corner seemed all ablaze with a great fire, and the trees in his garden had never looked so black nor his house so grey, he had looked up at the house and seen one window, under the roof, burning with the same red light. It was the window of a box-room, full of old things, of brown parcels of papers piled up to the ceiling, of broken chairs, of old boxes, of pictures stacked against the walls—a room in which he never knew what he might not find.

Barrie looked up in amazement at that window flaming and flashing in the sky. Then he ran up to the room, hot with excitement and delight, for he believed that from

its window he must look right into the mysterious world round the corner. But when he reached the window the light had gone. He looked out, in bitter disappointment, on fields, like any others, as grey as his garden. Only, far away, he could see the same red light burning on the windows of another house.

This was the beginning. After this it never seemed so certain that the corner of the grey wall was *the* corner, and then, in time, he came to know the road beyond it very well, from the corner of the wall down to a bridge. There he bowled his hoop and whipped his tops in the warm delightful dust, and watched the great hay waggons go rolling by. The belief faded away. For a time the corner of the world was the edge of a wood on the slope of the hill beyond the bridge—until he went there also, and found beyond it only fields.

So the mysterious corner passed from place to place, getting always further away, and from place to place Barrie followed it, finding each new place very pleasant to play in—but without enchantment. Until it came to its last place, and from there it was never driven any further.

This last place was the distant house which he had seen from the box-room, with its windows aflame. The box-room still remained, because of that one moment of magic certainty, a place from which perhaps he would some day look round the corner of the world. He made himself a pathway across the piles of lumber, climbing by a packet of papers over a trunk and a rickety table of papier-maché and mother of pearl, to a big wooden box where he sat at the level of the window-sill. From that window he looked south-westwards to the hills. He could see the storms come blowing in across them. The house was halfway up the hill—a big house of old red brick with many tall chimneys and many windows. In front of it grew two poplar trees, like solemn church spires, so that he could never be certain how many windows the house had. One of its chimneys stood up in front of a gap in the hill behind, and when, in the twilight, poplars and house were hidden, he could still see that chimney alone in the sky. Over the gap behind the house a road crossed the hills. It was very white in the green turf, and looked as straight and steep as the chimney itself.

Between that house and Barrie's the road was hidden by the hedges with their tall elms. He looked across the trees and fields at that house, very clear and yet far away. That house and that road became the corner into the world beyond, and more than this, the world beyond itself. In that house everything happened; by that road everyone travelled. Those two were for him the scene of all adventures.

The princes and princesses, and all the kindly, fantastic creatures of the fairy tales, who once lived round the corner of the grey wall, did not live in the red house. It was the home of real men and women, for his latest book was a book of pictures of all the scenes of English history. It had supplanted the fairy tales and even 'Darkest Africa.' Like 'Darkest Africa' it seemed inexhaustible. He would go through it lying on the dining-room floor, and all the scenes in it seemed to fit themselves into the red house. In one of its rooms Mary Queen of Scots was beheaded. In another, tall men came to kiss Elizabeth's hand. In another Monmouth had crawled across the polished floor to the feet of James; and there was one room, always

the same—a room whose windows he could only see when one of the poplars was bent by the wind—in which had passed all those strange and florid scenes of the deaths of kings when men and women crowded about the bed with sad faces and whispering lips. Just over the hill the Romans had built their wall, and Wellington and Blucher shaken hands, and by that road itself Sir Walter Tyrrel had fled, and all the crusaders had marched to Palestine.

When he was tired of looking at the pictures, Barrie would go up to the box-room window and look at the house itself, and watch for the rare carts that went slowly up and down the road behind it.

One day he took the book of the pictures of English history into the garden, and lay under a tree to look at them. It was an afternoon in the late summer—one of those afternoons when the mist of the heat lies like a heavy enchantment on the fields, and the daylight is more silent and mysterious than the darkest night. Nothing moved, no bird called, no wind came. Even the trees seemed asleep, their branches held as still in the air as were their roots in the earth. Only the sleepless ants were busy, hurrying back-

wards and forwards by the paths which they had made through the grass. It was so still in the garden that, lying there against the tree, Barrie could hear their continual rustle-rustle—like a little wind blowing along the ground—as they moved in their hundreds through the dry grass-stems and over the dead leaves.

He had come, as he turned the pages, to a picture of the Canterbury Pilgrims, very quaint and gay, on their stiff little horses that looked half of flesh and half of wood, as they set out along a road no broader than one of his garden paths—a road that wound across half the picture to a church right on the picture's edge that was very small but very clear.

It must have been that picture, and the mysterious, sleepy stillness of the afternoon, which suddenly made him decide that he too would take to the road and go by it to the red house. There was something in the picture entrancing to a child. It was half real and half a toy; and the road was so clear. He could see it the whole way from the pilgrims to the church. It was as clear at the end as at the beginning. It made setting out on a road seem a very simple thing.

What he would do when he reached the red house ; why he went ; even what he expected to find—he thought of none of these things. All that he thought of was the delight of setting out.

He slipped into the house and made his preparations with care. He took with him the strap of a portmanteau, fastening it round his waist for a belt. At one side of this belt he carried a small lantern. The lantern had no candle inside, but when the sun shone on the glass it looked as if it were alight. In the other side of the belt he put a wire pistol. and in his pocket two of the wooden plugs which it fired. In his hand he carried a small switch. It was the nearest he could get to riding a horse.

So equipped he went up to the box-room and looked out.

The red house was still there, but it looked very far away. The two poplars, like spires, stood as still as if they were indeed made of stone, but the tall fantastic chimneys seemed to waver in the heat.

Then he went down, ran quickly across the garden, and so along the road by the grey wall, down to the bridge and up beside the wood beyond. He turned his lantern so that

its glass flashed splendidly in the sun. He touched the wire pistol in his belt. He felt again as he had felt that evening when he had gone with his mother across the garden to climb the wall to the moon.

His own house behind was hidden, and so was the red house in front. He could see nothing except the hot road, and the hedges grey with dust, and the sleeping hedge-side elms.

The first excitement of setting out began to pass. It was very hot down there in the dust. He began to feel tired; and then he began to feel lonely. Each turn of the road, and it turned many times, seemed like a door shut behind him which would make it harder to get back. He began to wonder now if he would ever find his way home.

There was nothing in his journey that was the least like the joyful picture of the pilgrims, as they went by that little winding road which was clear from beginning to end. On this terrible lonely road with its great, grey hedges closing behind him at every turn, he felt as if he were altogether lost.

But still he went on, gulping down his fear. He ran when he could, sobbing with the heat, and the weariness and the fear.

There was no pleasure now in lifting the lantern to catch the sun, or in the touch of the cool wire of the pistol. Bu he still gripped the forgotten switch desperately in his hand.

If only the trees would have waked and rustled he would not have felt so lonely and so tired, but they did not stir. The heat still lay like an enchantment, making the world motionless and dumb, and Barrie went on because he could not turn back. He could not think what would happen—he just went on.

Then he heard in front of him the noise of a horse and of wheels, and round the turn of the road came a cart. The driver's face was red and there was sweat under the rim of his hat, but his mouth was gay and his eyes were bright, and he did not seem to feel the heat. He waved his whip to Barrie as he passed.

"It's all right," he cried; "Now we shan't be long," and he laughed. Next minute he and his horse and his cart were round the next turn, and had gone as they had come, with a rattle. But suddenly everything was changed. The world was real again. The driver had broken the awful spell of the

loneliness and heat. Perhaps after all there was not far to go. Barrie pushed on, very tired, but no longer afraid.

He felt too, though he did not know what it was, that sudden, mysterious change which comes at the end of a hot day, when, as the afternoon turns to evening, the sunlight grows gentle and clear, and it seems as if some clean breath had blown unnoticed through the air carrying away from it all the dusty burden of the heat. All Barrie knew was that the trees had waked. He could hear them far above him rustling and whispering again.

The red faced driver had spoken truly. He was nearly at the end of his journey He stopped at a gate, and as he looked between the bars his heart jumped. Across the fields he could see the hills, very near and very green. He could see their smooth curves full of shadows. From his window they had always looked very distant and grey. But these were the hills. They had the same clear straight line against the sky which no one could mistake. He knew that somewhere very near was the red house.

As he looked he suddenly wondered why he had come, and what he should do and—

with a thrill that was half excitement and half fear—what it was that he expected to find. He was still looking and wondering when a voice called to him.

"Hallo!" it said, and Barrie turned and saw a man sitting on a low wall on the other side of the road. His hat and stick were on the wall beside him, and he was smoking a pipe. His legs were white with dust, but he had the clearness of the evening in his eyes, and altogether a look of great ease and contentment.

"Thirsty?" he asked. "It has been hot walking."

Barrie nodded, and watched him as he took some big red plums from a bag which hung from his shoulder.

"Better come up here," he said, and he lifted the boy up beside him, looking at the dust and the tear stains on his hot cheeks.

As he settled him on the wall he touched the pistol and the lantern.

"Wise man," he said approvingly; "one never knows what might happen."

With that Barrie knew that there was nothing to fear, and bit eagerly into the biggest of the plums.

For a time there was silence while Barrie ate and the man smoked.

"Far to go?" he asked at last.

Barrie considered a moment and felt puzzled.

"I don't know," he said truthfully, and the man nodded, as if Barrie had told him everything, and he fully understood.

"I've come from over there myself," he said, and he pointed across the gate to the hills.

Barrie's heart jumped again. This man must know. He had come by the road.

"Did you see the red house?" he asked.

"Why, yes," said the man. "You see it round the next turn of the road."

Barrie looked at him, and then, because his mouth was full of the sweet freshness of the plums, and because he was at rest after a hard thing done, and because he felt the gentleness of the evening, and because he was asked no questions, he tried to explain about the red house and the road over the hill. He tried to explain and he failed completely. It had all seemed so clear and simple in his mind, clear and simple and inevitable, when he had looked at the red house and the road behind it from the box-

room window, but he had never tried before to put it into words, and of course—though he could not know this—he was bound to fail. Worse still, as he struggled with the words, his belief in the red house and the road over the hill began to fade. The words were like a cloud that had suddenly passed over the sun. The house and the road were still there, but the best part of them had gone out. What was there in these terrible words that could make beautiful things absurd, and real things impossible?

He stopped miserably. "I don't know," he said.

Then he looked shyly and ashamedly up at the man, but the man was not, as he had feared, laughing. He was looking down very gravely, very kindly. He said nothing, being for the moment puzzled at this odd jumble of poplars like spires, and the death of Charles II, of Mary Queen of Scots and a box-room, of the burning windows and a road, as tall as a chimney, going over the hill, but, being a wise man, he seized on the one thing that seemed to promise a way through the mystery, and that was the road.

He followed it, asking careful questions as he went, and watching Barrie's face all the

time, until it brought him back to the box-room window, and the book of the pictures of English History. Then he, too, looked out of the attic window and saw the red house and the distant road, and all was plain.

"I understand," he said.

He filled his pipe very slowly, while Barrie watched him anxiously.

"I understand," he said again, and brought more plums out of his bag, and blew his smoke up among the leaves of the tree above the wall. Then he began to talk, no longer looking at Barrie but across the gate and up the hill, and as he talked Barrie forgot to eat his plums, so amazed was he. For this man seemed to know already everything that he had wanted to tell him—everything and more besides. His words made real again all that had begun to fade as soon as he himself had tried to put it into words—the red house and the road and his belief in them. They came back clearer and more sure than ever before.

The man stopped, and looked down at Barrie, and when he saw his face and his clenched hand with the juice of the forgotten plum running between his fingers, he smiled.

"The red house is just round the next turn of the road," he went on, "but it's not worth while to go and look at it."

He saw the disappointment on Barrie's face, but he shook his head

"No," he said, "we are not going round the corner. It's like the one forbidden thing in the fairy tales. If you do that one thing you lose everything. I've been round many corners in my life, and I know that there are some corners—and this is one of them—which it is wiser never to turn. There are some houses—and your red house is one of them—which you can always see best from your own attic window. There are some roads—and for you that road behind the chimney is the road—which will take you further across the world than any other, if only you do not try to find where they go. It's hard to understand, but I tell you because I know."

He spoke very earnestly, and though Barrie did not understand at all, and wanted very much to see the red house, he was content to believe that he must not go any further.

Then the man took his hand, and together they went back along the road by which

Barrie had come. It was cool now, and beautiful with shadows, but as they started on their way they could look up and still see the sun shining in the tops of the trees. All the heat and terror of the road had gone, and the man sang songs as they walked. There was one, a queer sad song, about a ship called 'The Golden Vanitee,' so queer and sad that Barrie could not tell why he liked it. And there was another, which he liked best of all —although he could not understand any of the words—because it seemed to go on like a road, like the road over the hill where he was not to go; and in every verse there was one line—and the man taught him to sing it—which was like little drums beating. Barrie felt that with this song he too could have gone on and on and never been tired.

In this way they came very soon to his gate, and he said goodbye and ran in and across the garden with those little drums going "Mironton, mironton, mirontaine," through his head.

So it was that his search ended with the last corner unturned, and that the world beyond was never driven out of the red house.

CHAPTER VI.

THE UNKEMPT GARDEN.

IT IS commonly known as the fallacy of realism, this mistake into which even the wisest fall in their dealings with children; and for the children themselves it is one of the first puzzles of this life.

We are all seeking reality, of whatever age we are, but no one knows, least of all a man when he tries to help a child, what it may be that, for another mind, will suddenly make all the things of the imagination real. How can he know? For any odd, unexpected, even trumpery thing may have this power, in the same vivid overmastering way in which a smell or a bar of music will bring back, not

the visual memory only, but the very emotions of some past event.

It was as the puzzle of the unkempt garden that Barrie first met with this ancient mystery. His garden had beds where anyone might walk; paths where the weeds grew; lawns un-cut, and, in the far corner, a great gipsy encampment of foxgloves, loose-strife and canterbury bells. His elders, betrayed by the old fallacy, thought it just the garden for a boy, since he could play in it without fear or restraint. But the very thing which they thought made it adventurous, he knew made it tame because, for one short and glorious afternoon, he had visited a garden where rules were as thick as the summer flowers; where none might step on the beds; where even the edges of the lawns were forbidden, and trees of knowledge, which none might touch, grew at every turn. To cross that garden, either in pursuit or escape, was a perilous adventure, full of excitement and despair, of quick turns of fate and sudden disaster, where victory went to the cool and far-seeing, while the impetuous would fall suddenly among flowers and be destroyed. There is nothing that the bold cannot overcome in the wildest of wild gardens, but that well-kept

and ordered place was full of impassable things. It is hard to make an unscalable cliff of a paling which any one can climb, or an unfordable river of a path which one has jumped many times, but a forbidden geranium bed is higher than any mountain and wider than any sea. It is like that handkerchief in the Russian fairy tale, which was thrown down at the feet of the pursuing witch and, as it touched the ground, turned into a river.

That trim garden was the scene of homeric contests. The gods fought in it, and though they took the shape not of mortals but of inanimate things, they were none the less omnipotent. Apollo did not snatch Paris away in a cloud, but rose as a rockery before Achilles, and when Athene stopped Hector and made him turn to fight, it was not as Polydorus that she did it, but as a laurel bush.

The gods, when they take these shapes, are not to be disobeyed, for disobedience would have closed the garden at once to the whole race of men. This it was that made that place the scene of adventures and many heroic deeds. To Barrie's own wild garden, full though it was of beautiful things, the homeric gods never came. What was that

shaded and purple field of foxgloves to him, or the tangle of the untouched shrubbery? In the homeric moods he would have given them all for a path where he might not walk.

But long before he visited that garden of forbidden things, he had met in his own garden, and fought there, with the great fallacy. For he had an uncle who was a priest of realism. He was a kind-hearted and affectionate man, well known, among those of his own age, as a great lover of children. He was always ready to help them and play with them, but—and this neither he nor those of his own age knew—there was a curse upon him. He missed the soul of every game.

Barrie avoided this uncle as much as possible, and made no response at all to his bluff, affectionate advances. He treated him with all a child's cool and unconscious cruelty. For three times this uncle had tried to help him, and each time he had done an outrageous thing.

The first time it had been with the gift of a ship, a beautiful little top-sail schooner, which, as he had been very careful to point out, was a correct model of the real ships which went to sea, from the topmast yards to the well cut lines of the hull, from the anchor

to the wheel. She even had a compass. Barrie's uncle prided himself on knowing what a boy liked—accuracy, realism. He would not allow any shopman to palm off on him the sort of model ship that an aunt would have been content to buy. And these things, rigging and compasses, companion hatch and davits, were indeed reality to him. He did not know —how could he?—that Barrie, since he had no sea, and played with his ships on land, asked first of every ship that she should have a flat bottom, so that she could sail over the smooth seas of the carpet, and through the rough seas of the uncut lawns. He did not know—how should he?—that reality was not in davits or compasses, but in the bending grass stems which were like great waves breaking over the ship's deck, as she was thrust perilously among them.

The second time that he failed was one summer when Barrie was passing through a boy's inevitable fever about horses. That summer he saved all his money to buy walking-sticks, and spent all his time riding them round the garden, on pacing them statelily up and down the road. Nor could anyone please him more than by helping him in his search of fine names for them.

To him his uncle came one day when he was busy laying out a steeplechase course, threw off his coat, for he was a stout man who soon grew hot, and helped him with great goodwill. When other people passed, they smiled and said, "What a boy's man he is—a thorough boy himself," and the uncle smiled back at them. It was his vanity to be boyish.

At last the course was finished, and Barrie rode out to it on a lovely little cherry-wood walking-stick, whose name was Sherry-Cobbler. Round the course he went, and knocked the pole off the highest jump. His uncle came up, red of face and full of hearty sympathy. "Not such a bad shot, old chap," he said, "but you would jump better without that stick."

What else could Barrie do but turn Sherry Cobbler's head, in sick silence, and ride away?

The third time his uncle touched and offended something still deeper in Barrie's soul.

When he had gone in search of the red house and listened to the man who talked to him sitting on the wall Barrie had first come under the mysterious power of words, that magic in them by which they made things

more clear and real even than a picture. He still looked, sometimes, from the boxroom-window at the red house and the road behind the tall chimney, and longed to hear again the song of the road with the little drums beating through it. But the thing he had learnt that day he still scarcely understood. It was buried in the soil of his mind—waiting.

Then, suddenly, one day, he felt again the inexplicable magic of words. He felt it in two words that he found in some book of a boy's adventures in the islands of the South Seas. The words were 'impenetrable jungle.' There was in the very sound of them something deep and mysterious, something both terrifying and beautiful. In them were all the pictures of Darkest Africa. He felt their beauty by day as he went about the house with a gun slung over his shoulder. He felt their terror by night, when he passed the open doors of dark rooms. He would stand sometimes at the piano, with his gun, and chant those words to the music of the deep and resonant notes at one end. Then with a sudden jump to the other end, before the deep notes had altogether died away, he would fill the darkness of the jungle with the shrill scream of the parrots.

Here at the piano his uncle, ready always to help a boy with his games, found him one day, and, seeing his gun, asked what he did. Barrie told him, not without misgivings, that he was playing at 'impenetrable jungles.'

His uncle smiled. "Come along," said he, "I'll help you. I know a much better way of playing at it than that."

Together they went out into the unkempt garden and across to the shrubbery beside the gipsy encampment of the wild flowers.

"You don't need to make believe with a piano when you have a jungle like this ready made for you," said the uncle—"a jungle full of adventures and wild beasts."

He thrust Barrie under a laurel bush. "In you go," he cried. "I'll bet you'll hear a lion roaring before you have gone far."

As soon as Barrie had disappeared, he walked along beside the shrubbery roaring with as much variety as Bottom's own lion. This done he went back to the house.

"I'm afraid the boy wants imagination," he said to himself. "We must try to cultivate his imagination."

Barrie crawled on, very hot and uncomfortable. He heard, as he went, his uncle's foolish

roaring. An ant bit his hand, a twig struck one of his eyes. He went on, his eyes tightly shut, smarting and wet with the pain. Some of the bushes were very hard to pass; their branches held him, scraping his face and hands as he struggled with them, but, in ten minutes he had broken his way through, and was out on the other side. The dull and shameful exploit was finished, and he went straight back to the house. His face was flushed, but it was not with the excitement of lion-hunting. The soil of the shrubbery was thick on his hands and knees, and there was bitterness in his heart.

"You're soon back," said his uncle. "You can't have shot many lions in that time. But now you know something of what a jungle is like."

Barrie nearly choked.

"It was just a shrubbery," he said. "It wasn't the least like an impenetrable jungle," and then, with the scratches and whip of the branches still smarting on his hands and face, he added, "I could hardly get through it at all!"

At that his uncle laughed. Then as he turned away he shook his head. He was very much afraid the boy was a fool.

But Barrie went again to his gun and the piano, and with them brought back the magic and mystery of the 'impenetrable jungle,' where the parrots screamed and dark faces looked out from behind the trunks of monstrous trees.

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CHAPTER VII.

THE SMELL OF THE SEA.

IT OFTEN happened that when visitors came to Barrie Marvell's house they would stand in the garden looking across to the distant hills, and, drawing in a great breath, would say, "You can actually smell the sea here." Barrie would stand beside them, and lifting his little nose to the south west wind, in careful imitation, sniff vigorously, say "ha-a-a" as they did, and wonder what it was, this mysterious thing called 'the smell of the sea.' For he could smell nothing except the smells that were always in his garden. He thought sometimes that perhaps when his nose was bigger he would be able to do it. For he longed to smell the sea like other people. Though he had never seen the sea, half the things of the imagination had come

to him from it. He loved ships. He knew already their riggings. He had taken in bits of sea-talk and bits of sea-songs. With him, as with half the boys of England, who do not know the sea, there was nevertheless a deep and rich flavour of its salt in all that fed his mind.

That salt remains. The sea belongs to such, through all their lives, though they may never go out on it beyond the sight of land, and when they go be as sea-sick as would any peasant of Thibet, all of whose winds have lost the smell of the sea a thousand miles or more before they come to him.

Though he could not smell it for himself, it was a great discovery when he heard that the smell of that great familiar, mysterious world of ships was somewhere in his own garden. He took the news at first with the immediate literalness of childhood. Though he knew that it could not really be so, he went for a long time hoping that he might come suddenly on the sea round any corner, just as he knew, when he met the good smell of dinner in the passages, that he had only to go to the kitchen, to find the dinner itself.

When he understood that the sea was nowhere near, but that this mysterious smell of

it—which try as he would he could not smell — was brought by the winds, then the winds leapt against his house, and shook the great trees in his garden with a new romance. On those stormy days, when he played in his attic, leaving the door open between his bedroom and the square landing under the skylight, then he felt as if he were really at sea. His ships were scattered on the floor of room and landing as across two oceans. There were piers and harbours of stone and wood and books, built against the walls; and the rain was beating on the skylight, and the tumultuous wind was in the trees. But that thing which touched it all to life, filling the attic with breaking waves, making perilous the bed on which he stood as on a ship's uneasy deck, was this thought, that the wind had come straight from the sea.

. . . . . .

One morning Barrie came downstairs to find that the house was being painted. Enormous ladders were lying in the garden. There was a handcart full of pots and brushes and ropes. Strange men were calling to one another, and going about the house and garden wherever they liked, opening doors

and looking in at windows, behaving most familiarly. It was an astonishing change, and the most astonishing thing of all was that these men, who were suddenly everywhere, took no notice of anyone, and no one took any notice of them. It was almost as if the house belonged now to two entirely different sets of people, each using it in their own way, each unconscious of the presence of the other, and as if only he were aware of them both.

When he had got over the amazing unreality which haunted that first morning as of a double world, Barrie began to take an interest in these strange invaders. He was fascinated with the little shrieking flame that licked all the paint off the front door as if it had been the tongue of a terrible imp, trying to devour the house. But most of all he loved the splendid negligent ease with which the men climbed their enormous ladders, and hung their paint-pots from the rungs by little double hooks. He longed to climb a ladder. He wondered what it was like to look in at all the windows from which he could only look out. He made himself a pot with a string handle, he made himself a hook of wire, and each evening, when the

brushes and paint-pots were put away, and the men had gone, and his garden was silent again, he would slip round the house in the dusk looking for some ladder which he might climb. Once he had believed that he could reach the moon. Now he would have been happy if he could have climbed to the top of the house and looked in at his own window. But to every ladder a plank was bound, covering the rungs and stretching up higher than he could reach. Try as he would he could never climb it.

He had forgotten the sea, he had forgotten all his other games in this new delight of tall ladders and swinging paint-pots—in this new longing to climb the house. He had forgotten the sea, but suddenly and strangely these workmen brought it back to him, and for one glorious moment it was as if he had been right, and not only the smell of the sea, but the sea itself, was in his garden.

That morning he found the workmen in his attic. A ladder stood in the middle of the landing, and there was a new light in the place. He looked up, and for the first time saw that the skylight was open, and that the ladder went right through it. Beyond he could just see a chimney.

He had never known before how thin was that solid roof above him, nor how awfully near was his attic to the sky.

He stood there for a long time looking up through the skylight, watching the careful feet of the workmen as they went up and down that ladder, listening to their voices as they called across the roof. How the opening of that one little window, which had never been opened before, had changed everything!

The workmen took no notice of him, but he was always there with one hand on the ladder looking up into the windy sky. At last one of them spoke.

"I hadn't oughter," he said, "but I'll take you up if you promise to go careful."

Barrie nodded. He had no words to say to this wonderful thing, but he began to climb. Then, as he came out upon the roof where another workman waited, he felt as if, like the moon when he tried to take her in his hands, he had suddenly shot up miles above the earth. He came up out of the warm stillness of the house, and the shouting wind took his breath away like hands squeezing his throat. It tore at his clothes and lifted his hair, and seemed as if it were trying to force his eyes still wider open. He felt as if he had

been suddenly whirled away into the sky. He caught, gasping, at the workman's hand.

Then, as he steadied himself, he looked round—at the chimneys, solid and great as houses; at a ladder laid on the sloping roof; at the smoke, which the wind seized as it came out of the chimney, just as it had seized him, and sent rolling and whirling all across the roof; at a workman whom he could see dimly through the smoke. Another workman came up the ladder on the long slope of the roof, whistling as he came, but as he reached the top the wind cut the song suddenly off. Then he called down to someone, unseen, on the other slope. Over the low parapet Barrie could see the great swaying green top of a tree that that kept appearing and disappearing as the wind blew. He could do nothing but stand clutching the workman with one hand, and the top of the parapet with the other.

The wind up there was new and terrible. It struck him as if it were a solid thing. He felt as feeble as the whirling smoke. But as he looked at the men climbing across the roof, standing unconcernedly in the wind, and then down the little hole up which he had come out of the dark shelter beneath, he

knew suddenly what had happened to him. It was like the great storm in 'Masterman Ready.' He had come on deck.

One of the men was setting a ladder against a chimney. His loose clothes were flapping furiously in the wind. He was without a cap and his hair was blowing this way and that as he moved. Then Barrie looked at the man who stood beside him and the hand that held him secure, at the big square fingers, and the brown arm, and saw with amazement a blue anchor painted above the wrist. It was the mark of Thrand Rame of the Long Serpent in those tales of King Olaf which sometimes were read to him. They were full of words that he did not understand, but the very sound of them was like someone running at full speed, and shouting at the top of his voice, and waving a great sword.

By the bulk head tall and dark,
Stood Thrand Rame of Thelemark,
A figure gaunt and grand,
On his hairy arm imprinted,
Was an anchor azure tinted
Like Thor's hammer, huge and dinted,
Was his brawny hand.

It had been a long time before he had learnt what exactly was an azure-tinted

anchor, and now he saw one on this brown arm that held him. And there was Ulf the Red, "like a wolf's was his shaggy head," just climbing the ladder to the chimney top.

Then Thrand Rame spoke:

"Down you'll have to go now, little 'un We've got our work to do," and the huge hands lifted him to the ladder again, where other hands received him.

The attic was very dark and still after the roaring roof above. But what mattered that so long as the skylight was open and the ladder went up?

Barrie was at sea. All that day he walked up and down the attic, as regal as King Olaf, as grave as any Admiral. He was in the cabin, but on the deck above he could hear his men moving and Thrand and Ulf the Red calling to one another through the wind. So all day, pacing in his cabin, he sailed across an empty sea.

That day the men worked very late. Dusk had come, but they were still on the roof. Looking up through the skylight, Barrie could see nothing except the dark line of the chimney against the fading sky, but through the window of his cabin he could see, far across the dusk, a clear light shining, and at

this he remembered that every ship must hang out her lights at night. He ran downstairs, down into the forgotten house below, where there was an old bicycle lamp in which he was allowed to burn such ends of candle as he could get. The lamp was empty except for the spilled wax, and it was long before he could find another candle end and light it, and with its own hot wax fix it in its place. Then he hurried upstairs. His cabin was all in darkness, and he turned the dim light of his lantern through it. The ladder was gone, and he stood in his old attic once more looking up at the closed skylight above. Gone were Rame and Ulf the Red and all their Company of the Long Serpent, gone like some golden phantom ship of the sunbeams which dissolves when darkness touches it.

Next morning no men came. The skylight was closed.

So the game ended. But at night when the winds blew, Barrie would lie in bed and think of Ulf with his long hair, of Thrand Rame, and of Long John Silver and Masterman Ready, of all the seamen of the great ships calling to one another on the decks above his head. He would listen for their steps through the rain and the wind.

But in this life, for everything one gains one must give something away, and in return for that great day and the memories which it left Barrie gave something. He could no longer play at ships in his attic. The glory of those games had gone. Now that he had met the great winds on the roof, they could no longer blow in through his window as they had blown before, seeming to bring the waves all tumbling after them. That room, which had been King Olaf's cabin, could not again be the open sea. The decks now were above his head. The winds blew over them—but the hatch was closed.

CHAPTER VIII.
THE THREE FAIRIES.

AFTER his search Barrie went no more by the road, but because he had known its pains and pleasures, its heat and weariness and great content, he stood very often at the gate of his garden watching the people go by. There were not many. Often in a whole day none passed except the men and women of the farms going to the fields. But sometimes men went by shuffling through the dust, as if for some sin their feet were fastened to the road so that they could never lift them from it, nor stop, however tired they were. He knew that they were beggars, and was afraid, wondering when that beggar would come, most monstrous and terrible of all, who over his rags and dirt would wear a velvet gown. Sometimes he saw the gipsy-vans, and children walking behind them no

bigger than himself, whose bare legs, under the grey dust were browner than the sun-burnt fields after harvest time; and in the autumn the onion-sellers came up the road from the south, half-covered with plaited strings of brown and creamy onions. And once a very strange man came by. Under a broad black hat his dark and greasy hair hung over his neck. In his ears he had big gold rings, and broad silver rings on his hands. His clothes, too, were black, and the cheeks and chin of his dark face were covered with a thick short growth as black as his hair. But it was not at the man that Barrie looked. Behind him meekly waddled, like a great, grotesque, tired puppy, a dusty brown bear. He was held by a loose chain and the dark man carried a long and heavy pole.

When the two came opposite the gate and saw Barrie watching them they stopped. The man jerked suddenly on the chain, and the bear rose a little on his hind legs, fell on his fore feet again, and then rose and stood enormous, rocking a little as he stood. The man broke suddenly into a high, harsh song, and the bear began to turn slowly, lifting first one foot and then the other from the ground, as if great weights held them. When

this strange dance was done the bear lay down, and after much fierce prodding from the pole, pretended to be dead. Then he came to life and turned a clumsy somersault with the chain rattling at his neck.

All the time the man kept calling out as if he were fiercely excited or angry, and now he called more loudly than before. At this the bear rose again to his height, stood to attention with his paws resting on the pole, and the man placed his black hat on the bear's head.

This was the climax. The show was ended. The bear dropped again into the dust, and the man came forward with his hat in his hand.

Barrie understood that he wanted money, and felt terribly uneasy and ashamed. He knew that he ought not to have looked, for he had nothing to give.

There had been one penny that morning, and how he wished now that he had not spent it! He had seen this show all by himself. It had been played for him alone. If only, as the man came forward, he could have paid as a man should! But the penny was spent, and there remained of it only half of a bag of sweets. This, since it was all he had, he held out to the man, and the man took it. Then,

still hat in hand, he began a speech. Barrie could not understand a word, but he could see that it was a speech of thanks, for the man bowed and smiled and showed the sticky bag to the bear, until one would have thought that these two toiled along the roads, and danced and sang, only for the sake of pear drops.

So this strange man talked; and his quick eyes, and his white teeth, his smile and his gold and silver rings seemed to flash and glitter against the blackness of his face and hair and clothes, like sunshine on a peat pool.

Then he stopped, and the glitter went out. He called harshly to the bear, tugged at the chain ; and the two shambled slowly down the road.

Of all who passed that way, coming to Barrie out of the open sunshine into the moving, mixing patterns of sunshine and shadow which the trees made before the gate, this man was the strangest. But though they were all so different, there was something—and he did not know what it could be—in which they were all the same.

One day three men came by. They sang a loud song as they came; and one of them was not content only to sing but ran ahead of the

others and danced in the middle of the road, swinging a stick above his head. They had neither coats nor hats but wore white jerseys above grey trousers, and their hair was full of dust. Barrie had never seen men go by more untidy than they, and yet they were different from all the rest. They walked differently. All the others—he saw it now—the labourers going to the fields, the beggars, the gypsies, and even the dark man with the bear, unlike as they were in many things, yet were all alike in this, that they all walked wearily, as if they must walk and walk all their lives, although their one happiness would be to rest. But these three walked as if to sit still would be the only unhappy thing.

When they came into the shade near the gate they stopped their song, and one of them said:

"Here we are, we'll sit here, and then go on and get beer at the next pub. It's bad to drink on an empty stomach, and it's a slight on good beer to eat food while you're drinking. We'll eat now."

Then he sat down on the bank against the wall under one of the beech-trees, and the other two sat with him, taking food out of a

bag which one of them carried over his shoulder—big pieces of bread and meat and cheese. These they ate carelessly and happily, biting great pieces out of the bread and meat, and talking all the time. Barrie watched them from the gate. He knew that he ought not to stare at people while they ate, but these three seemed indifferent to everything but themselves.

When they had finished the meat and bread, they took, very carefully, from a paper bag three jam puffs, already much crushed. Lest more of the jam should be spilt, each put the whole of his puff into his mouth at once, and for the first time there was silence, so that the eating of the puffs had the sudden solemnity of grace after meat. Then two of them took out their pipes, but the third having pushed the paper bag deep into the turf with his stick, walked up to Barrie, and stood looking at him. Barrie looked back unblinking.

"Solemn child," the man said, "one of these days you will be as young as we are. Do you know where we have come from? Fairyland! And do you know where we are going? Fairyland! That is the real difference between Fairyland and this beautiful earth,

that you can leave it and go to it at the same time. Did you know that we were fairies?"

"No!" said Barrie. "You don't look like fairies." Then remembering certain tales, he added, "but fairies never do."

The man shouted—"Do you hear that, you fellows? Here is truth and courtesy at last. I've asked fifty people that question, and not one of them knew what to answer. Some were puzzled and some were annoyed, some thought I was making fools of them, and some thought that I was the fool; and some giggled and some frowned, and some sneered, and some wouldn't say anything, and some tried to change the subject, and some turned back, and some hurried on, and one took to his heels and ran—but none ever before knew the right thing to say."

He turned to Barrie again.

"You're right," he said. "And that's why no fool ever knows a fairy, and yet he's the easiest thing in the world to recognize."

The other two had come up, and they all three stood, leaning on their sticks, and looked at Barrie, and he went on looking up at them, for he liked these men.

Then the first of them went on.

"Since you have recognized us, there is little more to say, but I will tell you this: I am a philosopher. I go through the world talking to people. If they would only listen to me they would all be better and wiser men. And this man is a poet. He makes wonderful songs. And this man is a musician. He makes magical music. But they both wait for their moment, for the same thing inspires them in different ways. It will set the poet making love-verses, but the musician, the tune for a drinking song. When the one is full of thundering words to be blared out with trumpets, the other is busy with little sad tunes for the flute. So they remain barren, but one of these days they will find their moment, and each will work with the other. Then we shall have that song of which the prophecy was written, and with it we three will go forth and 'trample an Empire down!'"

"What about that beer?" the musician said.

"Wait," said the Philosopher. "I am giving thanks for hospitality." He pointed to the bank where they had sat and addressed Barrie again.

"We have eaten on your land," he said, "and you have not turned us away. You will observe also that we have done no harm. The crumbs which we have left the birds will eat and be grateful to you for them: and I have buried the paper bag. The last time we ate on a man's land, leaning against a notice board which said 'Trespassers will be prosecuted', he came down and drove us away. He came when my mouth was full and got an unfair start, or I would have proved to him that his notice was an illegal fiction. However, we found another of his boards and dug it out, and dragged it with us until we came to a cottage, and there we borrowed an axe and broke it up."

"It was jolly hard work," said the musician.

"And we gave the pieces to the woman for fuel," said the philosopher.

"Like Robin Hood, you know," said the poet, who had not spoken before but had been watching Barrie; "robbing the rich to give to the poor," and he smiled.

Barrie smiled back, for he had not understood much of all this, but he understood about Robin Hood.

"We did much better than Robin Hood," cried the philosopher, "for he only took such good things as fat buck and bags of gold, but we found this utterly useless and insolent board, and by our labour turned it into the best thing in the world, the first that men got from heaven, and the last that the very old still desire, when all other desires are dead. Think how we have made that barren thing blossom and that evil thing do good! Think of the happiness round the fire when that wood is lit, tough wood that will burn long, and make deep red flames!"

While he was talking the musician had sat down beside the gate, taking out of his pocket a tin whistle, and as the philosopher thundered, he played a monotonous tune that did not end but came over and over again —an odd malicious background to the philosopher's unending talk. Now he called out to know if the philosopher were ready to go on.

"Not yet," said the philosopher. "We have been received at this gate as nowhere else. We must give three gifts."

He stopped, and when the poet would have spoken he stopped him also. They were both silent, but the musician still played his little tune.

"I have it," cried the philosopher, "a splendid gift. I give you this," and his voice became very deep and solemn, "that you shall always remember this scene, how we three looked, and all that we said. You shall remember it with pleasure in years to come, and speak of it with pride, and other men will envy you for it. This is my gift." He turned to the poet.

"And I," said the poet very gently, "give you what perhaps you have already, the power of listening. It's not these great talkers who see the beauty of the world or find the truth. Those are happy who look and listen and wonder, with their eyes wide open as your eyes are now. And it is they who make the beautiful things—to the surprise of their fellow-men."

"Poor child," the musician had come forward again, "why are fairy gifts always for the future? I give you this tin whistle to play with now. Watch my fingers." He put the whistle to his mouth, and, as he moved his fingers up and down, a tune came so quick and gay that Barrie felt it would bring him running out of the house, and through the garden and down to the road to see who played it.

"It's quite easy," the musician said, and played it again. "You see how it's done?"

"Yes—No," said Barrie all in a breath. "I rather think I missed some."

"Try for yourself, you may find it," said the musician, and put the tin whistle in his hand.

"And when you have found it," said the philosopher, "and can play it, everyone will come to you, and all roads will be easy to you, and you will reach the place that you desire."

"No, no, no!" cried the poet, "that's the mere froth of romance. You talkers are like rivers, the faster you go, the more froth you make."

"But there's good water underneath," said the philosopher, "and the faster we go the sooner we reach the sea."

"And are lost in it and forgotten," said the poet. "Give me a lake. It waits and receives things. You can see the trees in it, and the clouds, the stars and the wind."

He turned to Barrie.

"Try and find the tune," he said. "Perhaps you will never find it. Perhaps when you find it you will not think it worth playing. But what does it matter either way? Trying to find it, who knows what

tunes of your own you will make—and that is the best thing in the world."

He seized the other two by the arms, and before the philosopher could speak again had hurried them into the middle of the road. Then all three stepped out and along it, and turned the corner without looking back.

Barrie stood in the silence by the gate, while the birds came down from the trees and picked up the crumbs. He looked at the empty road.

They had been so strange. They had gone so suddenly. They had walked so differently from all the rest. The rest had walked like tired men, but these three as if they would still be singing when they came to the end of the world. And there was the tin whistle in his hand. He knew that they must be fairies.

CHAPTER IX.

WORDS AND WORDS.

WORDS were to Barrie a puzzle that grew with the years. As with all children they had begun for him as a delectable physical discovery like blowing bubbles with one's mouth, or finding the way to it with a spoon. They were in the beginning simply another thing that he could do with his mouth, a new kind of bubble to blow, and at night he would lie awake in his cot, and in the darkness, go over his list of words, not once but many times, in grave solitary enjoyment of the pleasure of making them.

After this, when words became easy, they were no longer a delight to make. He forgot them again until that time came when he began to find that they could do things. He could not, in his own mind, put it more clearly than that, but so much he felt very clearly. Words could change a place, or change a game, but soon he found this strange thing

about words that once he had given a name to something it was hard to take the name back. He might turn a chair into whatever he liked by giving it a name, but he could not as easily change it into something else. The name was too strong. It entered in some mysterious way into the being of the thing. The thing and the name were different, but often the name was the more real of the two. This was clear enough when he turned an ordinary into a wonderful thing by giving it a name, when he called his bed "Hispaniola" out of *Treasure Island* and with that name for sole equipment, went to sea. But there was something more, something deeper still—a mystery. Words changed things in another way which he could not explain. But he knew it. There was, for example, that pudding called roly-poly. He disliked it, whether it was all oozy and sweet with strawberry jam, or dry and full of black currants. He did not know why, but he disliked it. His dislike had been immediate and complete. No one could make him like it. All the familiar games were tried. The spoon was turned into an engine, and he was invited to make a tunnel of his mouth. The pudding was broken up to little pieces. The plate

became a hen-roost, the pieces of pudding were chickens, and he was to be the wicked fox come to gobble them up. But in vain. No acting or make-believe would tempt him. He would not like roly-poly pudding.

Then one day, there appeared at table a new pudding. It was shaped like a bowl upside down, but otherwise resembled the roly-poly. It was white, and it was full of black currants. When a piece lay on his plate it looked still more like roly-poly. He sniffed at it.

"What is it?" he said.

"Marie Antoinette Pudding."

"Why 'Marie Antoinette'?"

"That's its name. Marie Antoinette was a beautiful Queen a long time ago."

"Did she make it first?"

"Who knows! Perhaps she did."

Barrie ate. In small pieces it looked exactly like roly-poly. It tasted exactly like roly-poly. He knew that it was roly-poly. But yet it was different. He ate it thoughtfully. Marie Antoinette... Marie Antoinette... He finished his helping and asked for more.

But words could do more even than work this mysterious change in roly-poly pudding. They were more wonderful even than pic-

tures. For pictures were hanging on the wall, or they were in books. Though he could get very near to a picture and look right into it, yet he could never actually get into it himself. But words went with him, changing the very place where he was.

Those words 'impenetrable jungle' with which, once, he had played could haunt the whole house with mystery, and he was right in the middle of it. They could fill a passage with adventure, and make a dark room terrible with unknown things.

He knew that words could do things that pictures could not do, for when he looked at the picture in 'Water Babies' of the doll that was lost in the fields, she was no more than a broken doll, but those words about her :—

"I found my poor little doll, dears,
As I played on the heath one day ;
Folks say she is terrible changed, dears,
For her paint is all washed away."

made her a living thing and always brought him near to crying.

In the same way there was something terrible and not to be explained in

"Hark, hark, the dogs do bark,
The beggars are coming to town,
Some in rags and some in tags
And some in velvet gown,"

so that they sent a thrill of fear through him, and at night when he heard the distant lonely call of a dog, it came with those words all mixed in it, and he saw the roads changed and fearful in the moonlight, filled from hedge to hedge with beggars, all hurrying, hurrying, hurrying, towards the town.

But though words were so wonderful, he had always, after that journey to the Red House, a distrust of them. He had longed to use them then. He had needed them terribly—and they had gone altogether wrong. They were wonderful. They had this magic in them so that one never knew just what they might do ; make an ugly pudding good to eat; make a game real; make him without cause sad or afraid. Yet they might go suddenly wrong.

And twice each year he hated them with all his heart. This was after Christmas and after his birthday, when he was set down to write letters to all the distant aunts and uncles who had sent him presents. He could not see the need for this. He felt in his heart that no aunts or uncles, however far away, could wish to make him suffer so. He felt that there must be some mistake. Yet the letters had to be written. He tried, but in

vain, to escape. One year, on the day after his birthday, he met the postman at the gate—the postman who had brought him all the presents—and gave him careful messages of thanks for each; and the postman promised that each message should be delivered. Barrie returned light-hearted and triumphant, and when he found that the letters must still be written, he went to the task feeling that now there was not a mistake only but horrible injustice.

Those words that were so airy and magical became now lifeless and leaden as he struggled to make them say on paper what he had to say. Behind the mere labour of the task was this feeling of something dead and useless. He never knew what to say, and he always said the same, thinking it out afresh every time.

"Dear Aunt Anna,

Thank you very much for the box of soldiers. I like them very much. It is very kind of you to give them to me. Uncle John has given me a box of bricks. . ." and so on through the family list. It would not be polite to say less, and what more was there to say? And yet sometimes he was writing of things that took his very breath away for

pleasure at having them, so desirable and wonderful they were.

Thus upon each birthday and Christmas—upon those mornings when before his porridge plate there stood the biggest dish in the house, and upon it the biggest dish-cover, not to be lifted till the porridge was done, so that he ate watching his own face comically curved and broadened in it, and thought what a queer thing eating was, when he saw himself do it; and upon those strange romantic Christmas dawns, when he waited for the first light to come round the slope of his attic-roof, and saw the foot of the bed all piled with shadowy things that grew more and more distinct until at last he crept across to touch them and found them real—upon all this happiness of new things that had come to him out of emptiness, there fell always the shadow of letters to be written. He waited as long as he could, but sooner or later he had to go to that useless toil with pen and paper and dull words. He went to it in tears, and came from it inky and forlorn.

It was as he came from it one Christmas-time that the last touch was given to his unhappiness and disgust.

That uncle was staying in the house who had once tried to teach him the romance of the 'impenetrable jungle'. He saw the ink stains and the marks of tears. He knew their cause. He hoped, not by blame, but by a story, to encourage the child out of his indolent dislike of writing. He knew the very story that would do it—a true story, and lest Barrie might think that he had invented it for the occasion, he got down the book to read it to him. It was the story of a little fair-haired boy who became a great and famous man and was made a Baron, because when he was little he loved reading and writing so much. He was always busy writing, sometimes it was history, sometimes poems, and he would be found, this tiny boy with the fair hair, lying on the hearthrug with his book in one hand, and a piece of bread-and-butter in the other. It was that last touch, the piece of bread-and-butter, which Barrie's uncle thought must make the story irresistible to any child. But all Barrie said was—"Why bread-and-butter? Why not cake?" And all the effect that the story had on him was to deepen his disgust and dislike of writing words.

And then one day Barrie made his great

discovery. If he disliked writing letters, he was very fond of opening them, and all that came to the house with half-penny stamps were his to open. They had been his from the day when someone had given him a little wooden paper-knife. They always arrived, his letters, already open, but this he ignored, and cut them very carefully with his paper-knife before he took out their contents. Then he would study them all very gravely, but more as a bit of acting than from any real interest in what they had to say. Thus each morning it was he who first saw the new grocery-list, or seedman's catalogue, or the latest prices of Dutch bulbs; and when he had looked at them he would put them down and forget all about them, as he turned to his porridge. But one morning, not long after a birthday, there came a printed letter, with a picture in it of a great figure of a man who might have come straight off the decks off Leif the Lucky's ship when he found Vineland the Good. So Barrie started to read what the letter said about this man with his long hair and his great moustaches that hung right over his chin. At the top in very big letters were the words 'Viking Cocoa'; but though he read right through it very

carefully, and wondered what 'nutritious' meant, and 'beverage', and 'highly palatable', for he had never seen such words in any book—he could find nothing about the man. This he thought very strange, for the man's picture filled half the page. At last, at the very bottom, he came on something really interesting.

The letter ended by saying that to anyone who wrote a postcard would be sent a sample tin of cocoa free, and with the tin as 'an additional attraction'—but what that was he did not know—a wonderful paper fish which could be made to move as if it were really alive. The directions about the fish would be found on the envelope in which it came.

Barrie read this through three times before he could be certain that—incredible though it seemed—he had only to write to the Viking Cocoa Company and they would send him a wonderful fish.

He would write. He had never written such a letter before, but how different it was from writing letters of thanks for things which he already had!

The first difficulty, and it seemed insurmountable, was the postcard. He wished

that it might have been a letter, for a postcard was such a small thing to hold all that he had to say. But it said postcard in the 'Viking' letter, so postcard it must be. He would take no risks. But he felt that he could not work straight on to a postcard. He must do it first on a sheet of paper— a large sheet where there was room to think.

The beginning was easy. He wrote "Dear Mr. Viking," for he did not doubt that this great seaman whose picture was on the letter would himself, and withhis own hands, send him the wonderful fish. After that the letter grew more difficult. He felt that he must not ask at once for the fish, but at the same time he wanted to go straight to the subject of his desire. So he wrote—"It is very kind of you to give me a wonderful fish"—almost straight out of the letters of thanks.

He would have liked then to explain that he did not particularly want the tin of cocoa, that it was the fish which he desired, but this was too complicated an idea to express. So, with much labour, he continued; "I should like very much to have a sample tin of cocoa"—he did not know what 'sample' meant, but that was what theViking called it,

and he put it in so that there should be no mistake—"and a wonderful fish."

To this, after some thought, he added; "I hope the fish will come soon."

That was all except for the signature. He was used to signing himself, "Your loving Nephew". That obviously would not do in writing to a Viking, but he did not know what to put. It was useless to send a letter if it were not properly signed. He was in despair. There must be something besides "Your loving Nephew"—if only he knew what it was!

He went and asked the cook, and she said that she always signed "Yours affectionately," and since it was a long word she wrote it down for him, "Yours affectly," but he did not like the look of it. Then he remembered that men who came to the door sometimes signed their names, with incredibly small pieces of pencil, leaning up against the wall to do it, and he asked the cook what it was that they wrote. She gave him a bill, crumpled and stained, but there, clearly written in a laboured hand-writing not unlike his own, was "Received with thanks, T. Aitkin." *Received with thanks,* they were the very words he wanted. He

wrote them down. He put "Barrie Marvell" after them and the letter was complete—all but the copying of it out, and that took a very long time. For he began in so big a hand that although it got smaller and smaller as he went on, he had already filled the postcard before he was halfway through. So he began again, very small, which made it hard to write, and this time it all went on to the card with just room for "Barrie Marvell" in the bottom corner.

By now evening had come. He had laboured all day, but the postcard was written. It was his first real piece of writing, his first effort to say with words upon paper something that he very much wanted to say; his first struggle to choose out those words which would say it best, most clearly, most persuasively. In short, it was his first attempt at style.

Two days later the incredible happened—a parcel arrived. He had waited, not really believing that it would come. Yet it had come, addressed not to "Master Barrie Marvell," but to "Barrie Marvell Esq.", and when he opened it he found inside many wrappings of printed paper with the picture of the Viking on them, and inside these a

very small tin of cocoa. Last of all he found an envelope so flat that it seemed to have nothing in it at all, but when he shook it there came fluttering out, like a dead leaf, a little yellow paper fish.

There was some printing on the envelope which said that if the fish were laid on the palm of the hand, the hand's heat would cause it to move as though it were alive. So Barrie laid it on his hand, waiting for marvels to happen, and at last it did indeed begin to curl and wriggle.

This little yellow fish was not like those flashes and darts of silver and shadow which he saw in the stream beyond the fields. It moved very languidly, like a fish that was still alive, but soon about to die. Yet what mattered that? It was more wonderful than any present he had ever had. For the fish in his hand, and the tin of cocoa, and the litter of papers and the label addressed to Barrie Marvell, Esq., all these had come miraculously to him out of the great emptiness of the world, simply because he had written. This was the delightful, the wonderful discovery which the fish had brought him. He knew now that with words one could do things.

CHAPTER X.

THE BROKEN HOUSE.

BARRIE always thought of it as the broken house, though it was no such thing. It was a house half-built, with the bright red of new brick, the roughness of unpointed mortar, the rawness of the freshly turned and littered earth, and the tall scaffolding round it. He had seen the house from the beginning. It was in the field of the red cows who used to put their heads across the gate and rub him with their wet noses, all yellow in the spring from the pollen of the buttercups. That field had been the same as long as he could remember, but one day men came and drove little white pegs into the grass. This was the beginning of the change. Next day the cows were in another field. Other men came and the turf was peeled away to be

piled in heaps under the hedge. The men began to dig. Carts followed them. The gate was taken down, and on either side of it the tall briar hedges, where the Traveller's Joy was already turning grey, were cut down so ruthlessly that they looked barer and colder and uglier than a shorn sheep. Barrie watched all this with deep distrust. Who were the men who had come to spoil the field of the red cows? And why had they come?

Next day there was a little wooden house in the field, and in the road Barrie passed cart after cart filled with bright new bricks. They all went in through the gap, until its soft earth, already trampled by the uncounted comings and goings of the red cows, was turned to liquid mud. Then the men built a bridge through the gateway with planks and broken bricks, and it jumped and squelched in the mud as the carts passed over it. The carts were emptied and went away, and by night there were stacks of bricks all along the hedge. Barrie knew then that the men intended something more than to destroy the field. Nor was he disappointed. More men came and there was always something new and strange to see: the careless flinging of

the bricks from the carts; the mixing of the pools of mortar; the piling of the wooden planks; the building of little huts roofed over with turf; above all the old bucket full of glowing red coals over which the men cooked bacon, and the black, steaming cans out of which they drank, lifting them straight from the fire. In all this was a careless freedom and a perfect ease which were enchanting. This was the way to live—to build a little house roofed with turf, and to make one's fire in an old bucket. Barrie spent half his time looking on with admiration at these strange and careless men. They all seemed to do what they liked, and each man rested when he chose, and they went about their work silent, unhurried and lumbering as the red cows.

Yet in the midst of them the house grew. Its walls came up out of the earth one day, mysteriously as a flower, and before they had gone much higher than Barrie's head the men had built a tall scaffolding round them. Then it was like the rough shape of a castle in the field. Those tall poles, standing up into the emptiness of the air, seemed like a promise of spires and towers to come. Within the scaffolding the house grew. It

grew as high as the men could reach. Then, to Barrie's joy, they made a little battlement all round it, these wonderful men, with planks and chains, and put their little heaps of bricks and mortar on it, and stood on it themselves to work; and, as the house still grew, they made yet another battlement above the first. It was then that the ladders appeared and the work was most delightful to watch, for all day long the men were climbing up and down them. Barrie loved to watch the brick-layers at work, beating up their mortar with their trowels, spreading it as delicately as butter on bread, and tapping their bricks into place. He even tried to imitate them, with his own box of bricks, some paste and a butter-knife. The imitation was not a success. It may have been that the paste was not enough like mortar, or more probably that he missed the open air and the scaffolding. He found none of the pleasure that he had expected, and he attempted no more imitations. He was content to watch and wonder. It was the hodsmen whom he envied most, putting bricks in their hods with a thoughtless ease, yet always arranging them in the same way, and all day long climbing up

and down the ladders. To Barrie they were more than men. They were giants. For when he tried to lift an empty hod he could scarcely move it. Only one other thing had ever given him such an awesome feeling of strength, and that was when he had stroked the red cows between their horns and they moved their heads away. So the work went on, and Barrie was long since reconciled to all these changes in the field of the red cows.

Many weeks had passed when came the strangest of all these changes since the first men had drawn the house out with their pegs in the green turf. There was a hard frost one night, and when Barrie went down to the house next day he found no men at work. The little turf-roofed sheds, the stacks of bricks, the piles of planks—on all these the frost had laid a mysterious hand. They were all whitened over like the hard earth, and looked now as if they had become a part of the field. All change had ceased. The frost had sealed the place. As it was, so it would remain. In the middle stood the half-built house, gaunt and desolate. It had walls but no roof. The windows and doorways were empty holes, and the half of one chimney, with a platform round it, stood up above

the scaffolding. The same mysterious hand had touched it in the night, and seemed to have laid many years on it, turning it to a ruin.

Barrie had never before seen the house alone, and he was awed by that white silence after all the labour of so many weeks. It made him think of the picture, in the Pictures of English History, of 'Kenilworth Castle by Moonlight' with its dim sheep and cattle and deep shadows, with the broken walls of the castle and the moonlight in the empty windows. It was a favourite picture of his because of the story underneath about the Queen's visit, when all the clocks in the castle were stopped at the moment of her arrival, so that while she stayed none might notice the passing of time. And then the Picture Book went on to describe what happened. "Days of unclouded sunshine are recorded, passed in every kind of princely pleasure in vogue in those days—hunting the hart, bear baiting, banquets and gorgeous masques, music, dancing and grand water pageants so that the whole country-side, for many miles round, was alive with festivities." Exactly what happened was not very clear to him, but the words gave him a vague

and dazzling idea of great games in which everyone played.

Barrie went into the broken house. It was the first time that he had been inside, and as he looked round he felt that it was utterly unlike any house which he had seen, or in which the people whom he knew could ever live. It must be an old and broken house like Kenilworth, belonging to that time called the past, when all those odd entrancing little people lived whose pictures filled his English History book. They were all called, he never could understand why, 'men and women in the costume of the period'. He often wondered exactly what the period could be, and why they all belonged to it. It was men and women of the period, in their fantastic clothes, who must have taken part in the games at Kenilworth when the clocks were stopped—in that place of the broken walls and the empty windows.

From the square hall of the broken house he looked through doorless openings into the rooms—rooms with rough brick walls and open floors. Between their joists he could see down into the cellars below, and through the joists above he looked up into floorless, roofless rooms.

Everywhere it was the same—like the cold ruin of a house, not of his world at all but of that mysterious 'period' when strange things were done. At last, in one room he found a ladder going down to the cellar, and not without hesitation, he went down. It was darker there, and he walked round touching the bricks, with their rough, untrimmed mortar, feeling the earth hard and uneven beneath his feet, looking up the immense and desolate walls into the sky. It was in such places—and he thrilled at the thought—that the great prisoners were kept, and from them made those glorious escapes which were the most entrancing of all true stories, and came nearest to the adventures of the fairy tales. He had them all in a book—Casanova, Caesar Borgia, Cellini, and Baron Trenck. And here, in the field of the red cows, he had found such a dungeon as theirs under the broken house.

He went up the ladder again, for it was very cold in the cellar, and wandering round outside, found among the frosted bricks and litter a piece of rusty iron. It was out of such a piece of iron that Casanova had made himself the tool with which he had dug his way through the walls of the Inquisition.

He returned to the house with this treasure, and hid it behind some bricks in the hall. Then he went away, planning many things, and that night he read again the escape of Casanova—most thrilling of them all—and wondered if he too, in the cellar of the broken house, could dig out the bricks with his rusty piece of iron, and if there was any way of climbing those great walls up to the empty windows where he would find the scaffolding, and ladders down to the ground.

He waked next morning still busy with these plans, and found that the bright frost of yesterday had turned to a gray warm rain. It rained all morning, but he was happy, still planning, and thinking of those dungeons, deep below the moats, where prisoners were left to drown. Late in the afternoon the rain stopped, and he hurried down the road by the black hedges, all silvered with the rain. But as he came near the field of the red cows he heard again the familiar noise of the trowels tapping the bricks. Next minute he could see men busy on the scaffolding round the chimney, and the hodsmen climbing the ladders. In a corner the fire was burning in the bucket, and tea was making in the black cans. The broken house of yesterday, the

dungeons, and now all his plans, had gone like the frost, in the night.

After this the house grew very fast. Barrie watched the white rafters covered with tiles, and knew that the last of the sky had been shut out. Men no longer climbed the ladders with hods of bricks, and the very sounds of the house changed. As he came down the road he no longer heard the familiar tapping of the trowels on bricks. It had given place to the heavier noise of the carpenters' hammers on wood. The scaffolding was taken away, and the house looked much neater and smaller. That was a great change. But the greatest of all came when the glass was put in the windows. That glass did finally shut him out. More than walls or roofs or doors, it made that place a house like any other—the house of someone else into which he had no right to go.

One morning he saw fires burning in the rooms, and a few days later the last of the men had gone. For the first time since that day of frost the house was alone. But how different now from that frost-struck ruin!

Bricks and wood, ladders and huts and bucket of fire—all the jolly litter of building had disappeared. The house stood alone,

and horribly new, in the middle of the overworn earth which only that summer had been green grass and buttercups for the red cows. It waited for the wind and rain and sun to temper it, and for the life that was in the trampled earth to grow about it, making it part of the place where it stood.

Before the spring came a garden had been laid out, and one day Barrie was taken to see the people who lived in the house. He entered it for the second time with a feeling of awe. It could not be the same as other houses. There must be something left that would recall the broken house, with its dungeons and desolate walls. He even wondered if, in some corner, he would not still find the piece of iron which he had hidden on that magical day of frost. But when the door was opened and he went in—there was nothing. It was only an ordinary house.

So Queen Elizabeth might return to Kenilworth, and stand on the grass in the banqueting hall, and look at the moon between the roofless walls, and remember the days when all the clocks were stopped that she might forget time.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DREAM MAP.

THERE was an atlas on the bottom shelf of the study which, long before he could read, Barrie had taken out many times, because, between the maps, were pictures of strange men and women, houses and many other things. One was nothing but faces, called, 'Types of the Human Race', and another was all swords and spears and shields, called 'Weapons of Central Africa.' But long after he could read the names of the pictures, the maps themselves remained as blank to him as the Greek and Latin books, which sometimes he took down. He knew them simply as coloured unmeaning pages to be passed by in search of other things. Nor, when he came to draw his first map, was it any more

than any other lesson. He would much rather have been copying the jolly black imps which his father would draw for him, with round heads, round bodies, and great round white eyes, in which one could make the most surprising changes by putting the pupils in a different place. The first map was England, and he drew it with heavy labouring pencil, altogether unstirred by the knowledge that it was his own country which he drew. In fact, long before the map was done, he thought England a very ugly and difficult country.

For a time he drew nothing but maps of England, until familiarity brought a little ease in drawing, and then he found some pleasure mixed with the many perils of the coast. He liked the fine sweep southwards from Bridlington Bay and the sudden turn into the Humber, making Spurn Head like a great bird's beak; and anyone could feel the satisfaction of drawing the squareness of the Wash moving grandly on into the noble curve of Norfolk and Suffolk. Thus, from Flamborough Head to the mouth of the Thames he went southward with a fair wind, but sooner or later, as he always knew, he would go astray in the Bristol Channel.

That impish inlet was never where it should be. It either tried to join the Thames near London, or drove like a spear-head deep into the Midland Counties. Once, indeed, sailing recklessly up it, he nearly plunged into the Wash again.

After England he drew Italy, coming to it with a pleasurable anticipation from the promise that it was like a leg. Before the map was done, he found that the pleasure amounted to very little, even though he discovered for himself that Italy was just about to kick Sicily, and only a minute before had kicked Corsica and Sardinia. If he might have played with this discovery he would have been happy. He wanted, next time, to draw Corsica being kicked, or to show Sicily, the kick delivered, just disappearing across the Tyrrhenian Sea. When this piece of improvising was denied him, he felt no greater pleasure in Italy than in England. With the same dull indifference he drew a sprawling black centipede down the middle of one, as he had drawn it down the middle of the other, vaguely wondering why its name had been changed from Pennines to Apennines.

This indifference remained until one morning he was set to copy a map, which, unlike England and Italy, had no shape at all. He was told that it was his own home—the village; his house; the road going down to the bridge and right out at the edge of the paper; a dark wandering line which was his stream; a square full of circles which was his wood. He looked at it at first with disgust. This shapeless map was duller even than England or Italy, for neither house nor wood, road nor stream was there so that he could see it. He drew the map and looked at it again, and wondered what it all meant. Then he saw that the road on the map turned after it passed the house just as the real road turned. He looked at the oblong which was his house and across the paper from it to the wood, along the stream to the bridge, and back by the road to the house again. It was just in this way that one really could go from the house across the fields to the wood and round by the bridge and the road. Undoubtedly the real things were in the map, but they needed to be properly drawn. One could do something better for the house than that featureless oblong. He enlarged it. He put in four windows and a door. He added

chimneys. They stood right over the road and the smoke from them rolled along it towards the bridge.

The burning spirit of creation was in him. He found his box of chalks, and with rich purple marked that corner of the garden where grew the foxgloves and the canterbury-bells. He filled the road with a heavy brown dust, and the fields with buttercups. He made his pale chalk stream as blue as the Tyrrhenian Sea, and rubbing out the absurd little circles, planted his wood with fantastic trees in olive and apple-green. He did not stop until he had turned that unmeaning map into a glorious and impossible picture. Then the fire of creation passed as quickly as it had come, and he wondered in vague alarm what would happen to him.

A little later he sat wearily drawing the map all over again. But what had been done, none could undo. He had turned that map into a picture and he knew now that every map was a picture, the strange shadow of a picture, with the real things—houses and trees, flowers, blue streams—hidden in them, waiting for someone to make them alive.

It was after this discovery that he first found a map in his dreams. It came in one of his dreams of escape. Of all the dreams that he dreamed, these dreams of escape came most often and were the most beautiful. They had an exhilaration, a freedom and a delight that are not to be described. In them, as he believed, he got into the very world of the fairy tales, where he travelled as quickly and lightly as the wind. Yet he never found in those dreams any of the things that belonged to the fairy tales, or if he found them, he never remembered them. What he did remember was always too ordinary and stupid even to be comical. So that he could never tell anyone of the dreams. To tell them as they had happened was to leave out everything in them that was beautiful, and to tell them as he had felt them was beyond the reach of any words that he could find.

One night he had dreamed that he was hiding on the top of a wardrobe, and the cook was looking for him. He was wearing—for no reason that he could understand—bright scarlet stockings, and as his legs hung over the edge, it was very surprising that the cook could not find him. All this, stupid as it was, he remembered with an exasperating

clearness, but then suddenly he was flying, flying, flying. He was in one of those wonderful dreams of escape. What it was that pursued him he never knew and never cared. He simply fled in laughter and delight, knowing that he could never be caught and never feel tired. But when he woke, all that remained of that flight was a vague and dazzling memory of happiness. The cook and the wardrobe and the scarlet stockings were as clear as the pictures on the bedroom walls—for he woke to find it morning—but all the rest was no more than blown mist with the sun shining through.

Sometimes he would play at those dreams during the day. He would imagine what it would be like to be small enough to go round the room high up on the wall; to spring from picture-top to picture-top; to climb their cords and then to creep all round hidden behind the picture-rail; to come sliding swiftly down the curve of the golden oval mirror above the fireplace until he shot from it far out into space and through the window; but what happened then he could not be sure. Sometimes he played the game out in the garden, where he could remain his own size, springing

from chimney to chimney, and then across to the trees, and from them, at a single step, to the clouds. It was a game which played best on the days when there were those piled white clouds, like solid hills, above the trees, for though he could jump as easily from the tree-tops into the blue sky, there was nothing to do there and nowhere to go. But when he reached the clouds he would climb up and down their great white slopes, and go into their valleys from which, as he believed, came the rain. It was best of all on those rare days when the sun was behind the clouds and only their tops were touched with its light. For then the valleys were deep and dark and cold as night, and the light was like a golden road all along the tops of hills. Barrie would imagine himself climbing out of those valleys and up to the golden road, and he would run along it half round the sky and back again, but at that golden road imagination stopped. He could run up and down it, but he could go no further.

Since the clouds so quickly changed, the game could never last very long, but because of that it was all the more exciting and beautiful. He had to watch their changes all the time lest he should be caught in the

valleys when they disappeared, or be climbing a slope when it drifted away. He would watch the great range melt into the sky until he could stay no longer, and then he would slide swiftly down the last white slope into the tops of the trees.

But all that play was not like the dreams of escape. For in the dreams was a swiftness and certainty and delight which no play could have. And then he found play mixing with the dreams, as the dreams had mixed with the play. First the map came into them and then there came a book, mixing very strangely with them, and they were never afterwards quite the same. One night in the middle of a wild escape, he found himself walking over the map. All the swiftness and delight had gone. He came to the black marks which he made on his maps for the Pennines and Apennines, and crossed them, but though he knew that they were meant for hills, they were flat as ink and paper. Then he woke—woke with the feeling that if only he had run across the map, as fast as he could run, it would have become real.

After that a map often came into his dreams. Once, in a dream of terror at he knew

not what, he found himself on the map and knew that he would wake. At that the terror was gone. But more often it was a dream of happy flight which ended on the map. As he came to it, whatever great wind of the spirit had carried him through the dream suddenly left him, and he struggled desperately not to wake. If only he could run he *knew* that the map would become real, but that flat paper beneath his feet held him to the earth, and he woke, screwing his eyes tight in a last desperate effort not to lose sleep. Then he would sit up, wideawake with the struggle; but all he could ever remember was the feeling of the delight of the real dream, and that map which brought him back to the waking world.

The book also he found in the middle of one of those fairy flights. As he fled a blank fell on him and he knew that the dream was coming to an end. But there was no map beneath his feet. Instead he seemed to be reading furiously, to keep himself in the dream. What it was that he read he did not know, and in some odd way he seemed, even as he read, to be making up the tale for himself. Then suddenly the blank lifted, the book had gone; that twilight

struggle to get back into the dream was over, and he found himself hiding under the bank of a stream. It was the first time in all his dreams of escape that he found, and remembered, something out of his own world which was not simply comical,—like the wardrobe and the cook—something which in both worlds seemed to be the same. He could see the bank which pressed above his head, and the grasses that hung from it, and through them the distant light. But he did not feel the water in which he crouched, nor anything except the triumphant security of that hiding-place. Then he was up and in flight again in a splendour of speed. It might have been half round the world and across the sky that he fled before he came at last to the map, to that great white space with the black flat mountains of ink, where always, before, the dreams had ended. But this time as he struggled desperately to run, he found himself hand-in-hand with someone. Together they fled faster and faster across the map, and as he had always known would be so, it became real beneath their feet. Who fled with him he did not know. He did not even wonder or wish to know. It was enought that they fled together, like clouds lifted by the

wind across the sky. But, as they fled, Barrie knew that they would meet something which they must avoid, and then, with the swift certainty of dreams, that there was but one way of escape. Without hesitation or fear, lifted up in a last triumphant delight to have escaped, they flung themselves into the sea. At that he woke, alone, and even as he woke he knew that they had not flung themselves into the sea at all. All that they had done was to stand on a wall, jump down into the field below and bury their faces in the grass—a boy and girl, smaller even than he really was, playing that they were hidden.

Of all his dreams none remained so clearly in his mind as that dream, with its great delight; its companionship—always before he had fled alone; the book that he seemed to be making up as he read it; the map which for the first time had become real; the bank where he had hidden; the wall and the field where they had jumped and where, at the moment of triumph, the wild escape had turned into play. Of all his dreams none that he remembered was so strangely mixed of real things and play. Were they all nothing but play?

With the dream-map and the dream-book he had found that in the world of sleep also he himself could do things. He could sometimes escape whatever power it was that took delightful dreams away. Yet in these dreams which he helped to make he could never find that laughter and delight of the great dreams of escape in which he did nothing but fly with the fairy spirit in him. They were never happy, for they never went altogether right, and he knew that things were happening to him inside it, but, try as he would, he could not go in. There were dreams from the dream-book of which he could never be sure if they did really happen or were only a tale that he read. That was the strange puzzle which the map and the book had brought into his dreams. These dreams were his own adventures, but he seemed all the time to be kept outside them. They were his own adventures, but he was only looking on.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BROWN BOY.

FOR one summer Barrie had a friend. It was a very real friendship, yet strange, for the two neither met nor spoke, nor ever saw one another except by rare glimpses among the trees.

It was for Barrie the summer of Robin Hood. A new book of those tales of Sherwood Forest had come to him for the birthday of that year, and had made magical all the trees in the little wood at the bottom of the field beyond the garden. Half of the wood was his. A stream ran through the middle of it, and across the stream he did not go, but upon his own side he knew every tree. There he spent his days, loving the struggle with the bushes as he crept among them; loving the noises which, when he remained very

still, grew louder and louder as if all the wood were coming alive, loving that warm, sweet smell of the old leaves and the earth, which is the smell of death turning to life again, without ugliness or suffering.

But even these would not have been enough if there had not been upon all that little wood, intangible and beautiful as sunshine, the influence of the gay laughter, the echoing horns and the jolly feasts of those tales of Sherwood Forest. He called the trees after the people of the tales. Robin Hood himself was a great oak, and a square elderberry bush was Friar Tuck. Little John was a beech, which had pushed up, lean and tall from the middle of a close-set clump of beeches, to find the sun. On the edge of the wood, away from the rest, was a pink hawthorn that was Maid Marian. The beeches that grew in close company round Little John, with their straight, smooth trunks of olive green, were the merry men.

Barrie spent a great part of the time digging small holes in the wood. The chief of these was between the roots of Robin himself, and there he kept a bottle of water mixed with oatmeal. In another was a little store of stones, and in another forks for his cata-

pult. He was always busy with these little romantic, secret dwelling-places, enlarging them and finding new ways to conceal them. He envied the squirrels that they had their own snug houses in the trees. It was what he longed to have himself, and he dug always with the hope that, somewhere among the roots, he would come suddenly on steps which would take him down to such a little earthen room (but this was out of *The Black Arrow* and not *Robin Hood*) as Lawless had, under the old beech-tree. Such a place had been a very castle of security and delight. When the wood should be leafless and cold, he thought of such a room beneath the roots of Robin Hood, with a lantern hung in it, as the best place in the world to be. There would be a chest in it for keeping things, instead of drawers and cupboards, and a bonfire in the corner instead of a fire in a grate. So much was very clear, but after that he could not be sure. Imagination was a Puck, a spirit full of tricks and surprises, delightful to play with, ready for all that was asked of him—for a time, and then suddenly turning as elusive as a dancing gnat.

It was so when Barrie was thinking half asleep at night, or when, with his eyes tightly

shut, he could see things quite clearly in his eyelids. The things would sometimes do as he wished, but if he struggled with them, out the pictures would go. It was with these picture-dreams as with words. One could never be sure of them. There was always in them this Puck-like incalculable thing.

So it was also in planning the room under the roots of Robin Hood. There was in it the lantern, and the chest and the bonfire and then, at a jump, the room was exactly like his own room at home. It was in the earth, but exactly like his own room, his bed and the big screen all pasted over with pictures, like a scrap-book, the same pictures on the walls and even the window and the wind blowing in; though where the wind could come from, deep down in the earth, and on what the window looked out, he could not tell. Such the room was, and he could not change it. Yet he knew that it was the securest, most cosy place in the world, and that a little flight of steps went down to it which no one else could find. But he had not found it himself yet. He wandered homeless, making these little hidden places in the soft earth among the tough and winding roots, where he could hide

many things, but where he himself was always too big to enter.

He had not found his own place, nor did he yet need to find it, for it was full summer in the woods. They were heavy with sunlight and warm shadows. The leaves waved above him like a multitude of fairy wands, and the silence was full of the soundless horns and laughter of Robin Hood.

His tree Robin grew down by the stream, thrusting out one low branch above it. Along this Barrie would crawl until he was right above the water, and there he would lie on these long summer afternoons, drowsily watching the stream go by. He would listen for the little plop of the rats and watch for their silent ripple in the water, while the green caterpillars would come down on their silver threads from the branches above, and he would find them crawling on his hands or feel them tickling the back of his neck.

Sitting on that branch, with his back against the trunk and the stream below his feet, he would play an odd melancholy game that gave him much pleasure. It was very sad, and yet, in a solemn way, it made him happy. It was the game of the death of

Robin Hood—of Robin on his last bed, when he sat up in the arms of Little John, fitted his last arrow to his bow, and shot it through the window and far out among the trees, to mark the place where they should bury him. Sitting there against the tree as if it were the arms of Little John, Barrie would shoot stone after solemn stone from his catapult across the stream and into the trees on the other side, listening for the little noise of them among the leaves and wondering where they fell on the soundless, hidden earth below. In part because that wood upon the other side was touched with the sadness of Robin's death, in part because it was all hidden from him by its trees, Barrie wondered very often what it was like, yet never crossed the stream to see. That stream no longer divided one wood into two. It became a dark boundary separating two different worlds of trees. In the one were horns and sunlight, laughter and hunting songs, and in the other all the dark witchery of woods. So they were divided. Yet above that stream, when the wind blew, the leaves of the trees on either side touched and rustled together.

In this way Barrie mixed with the things of that wood, where the trees were half-alive to him with the memories of the green archers. No Pan lay among the bushes on the other side or thrust a goat's leg into the water, or played a tune on a pipe of reeds. For of Pan Barrie had never heard. It was an English wood. That further shore was silent, and on his own side the songs were English songs. Yet through it all there rustled and whispered, in the living leaves when the winds moved them, and in the dead leaves when they stirred at the touch of living things, the spirit of that old half-life of men and beasts and trees.

The song that Barrie sang most was "To The Greenwood Tree." It had been very troublesome to learn, but now that he had learnt it, he knew that it was the very song for his wood. It was a song that one could start where one liked and that need never come to an end. When he sang it softly, it was as if all the little things of the wood were creeping across the leaves. When he shouted it, then it was like crowds of eager people hurrying over the fields towards the wood. He would go down to the wood himself shouting that song; and the louder he

shouted the faster he seemed to go, until it was as if the song had caught him up, like the wind catching the leaves, and were sweeping him across the grass. Then, with a last triumphant "Thither will I follow, follow thee," he would fling himself among the bushes, and lie there until he got back his breath. When he took up the song again it had changed. In the wood it fell to a whisper, a mere rustle of words and music in his mouth, or else it went on unuttered inside his head. For once among the trees he never even thought of singing aloud. There was something among the trees which made it impossible. Once only in the wood had he shouted the song. A sudden summer storm had come in the night. There was no rain but the sky was a battle. The wind seemed like a furious living thing in the wood, trying to tear up his trees and hurl them after the flying clouds, and the trees themselves seemed to be struggling to reach one another across the stream. He stood up on the arm of Robin Hood, and shot stone after stone across the stream, not mournfully, as when he played at the death of Robin Hood, but fiercely into the very faces of the fighting trees on the other side. And

he sang "To The Greenwood Tree," not as a dance among the leaves, nor a race across the fields, but as a challenge and a battle song. He sang it at the top of his voice, up into the wind and across the stream, until his whole wood seemed to be singing it behind him.

One day he went down to the wood singing the song. It was too hot to run across the fields, and he sang quietly to himself as he walked. He had a new catapult in his belt, made the night before and still untried. It had thick, square elastic, tougher than any that the shop had ever sold before. Over his shoulder hung a freshly filled bottle of oatmeal and water, and his pockets were heavy with well-chosen pebbles from the garden.

The wood was very still and its warm shadows pressed about him as he went through it, visiting one after another of his holes to see that all was well. Among the roots of Robin Hood he put the water-bottle, and in another hole most of the stones. One pocketful he kept for use, and climbed to the arm of Robin. There he settled himself against the trunk to try the new catapult with a long shot over the trees. While he tested it to see that all the fastenings were

secure, enjoying the stiff pull of the elastic and the stubborn strength of the hazel fork as it bent ever so little over his thumb, he heard a noise below him and looked up. On the other side of the stream, bending over it and poking beneath the bank with a stick, was a boy. All that Barrie saw of him, in the first moment of surprise, was that he wore brown clothes and from a belt of string round his waist three arrows stuck stiffly up in the air above his stooping body. Then he looked up, his hair hanging in his eyes, his face flushed and streaked with mud, the water dripping from his hands. The two stared at each other, and in that brief, silent stare each knew the other for an enemy. The Brown Boy snatched up his bow and jumped in among the trees as Barrie's stone, the first fired from the new catapult, cut a little white wave out of the muddy water of the stream just where the boy's stick had stirred it. Then Barrie tumbled out of Robin Hood, scraping his wrists and his knees on the rough bark, and plunged into the shelter of the bushes. His heart was beating fiercely with excitement. All the shadowy games that he had played through his wood had suddenly come alive.

He crept down among the bushes until he could look out across the river without being seen, but he could see nothing of the other boy. So he flattened out a place for himself behind the bushes and dug himself a hole in the soft earth where he could hide things, and made a path which took him up into the wood and round to Robin Hood unseen from across the stream. Then he went along the bank, as far as the wood went each way, slipping warily from tree to tree. At every tree he stopped to shoot his stone into the trees across the stream. No answering shot came; no tree moved and no face appeared. Barrie was afraid that the boy had gone.

But next morning, as he moved a little carelessly from behind Robin Hood, he heard a stone strike sharply on the bark; and another, away overhead, cut off a green leaf which fluttered down. He ran back into the wood, and creeping down to the bush by the path which he had made, he looked across the stream. He could see nothing, but he knew that the other boy was there. He understood the silence of yesterday. The boy had gone in search of a handier weapon than his bow, but, as Barrie saw later (and he lik-

ed him for it) the Brown Boy still carried his arrows stuck in his belt of string.

The woods were changed. All the mystery and unknown things of the wood across the stream took shape in that Brown Boy. How Barrie loved him, this strange companion, who was his perpetual enemy, but more understanding than any friend! It was as if their game was part of the very woods, as if each had learnt it from the trees and could not play it wrong. No words had passed between them and yet each understood. This was the odd touch of magic in it all, giving that game a reality such as had been in no other game that Barrie had ever played.

The woods were enchanted. Barrie went down to them never knowing now what new enterprise or peril might come from across the stream, nor when the quietness would be broken by the rap of stones on his trees or their splash beneath his banks. Sometimes for a whole afternoon he would see nothing of the Brown Boy at all, but pursue him blindly up and down the bank of the stream, by the sound of the stones. Sometimes the Brown Boy pursued him, and once or twice, lying hid and silent for a long time, he saw the Brown Boy stare out from

among the bushes, with his round, bold face, and his fierce and eager eyes. Then Barrie would shoot a stone into the water at his feet and the Brown Boy would disappear.

He was a boy of audacious resource and Barrie loved him for it. It was he who thought of the balloons. All that day the wood across the stream had shown no sign of life. Barrie had even climbed to his old place on the arm of Robin Hood, and shot many stones into the other wood, but no answering stone had come. Then suddenly away up the bank he heard the splash of a regular fusillade. He was down in a moment and hurried off to the defence, but as he crossed a place where the trees were few, he looked up and saw three balloons high above the Brown Boy's wood. One was blue, the other two were pink, and from each hung a toy soldier, whose paint shone in the sun. They were not too high for a catapult to reach them, but Barrie could not shoot. He could only stand and think what a splendid and reckless idea it was. He himself could never have done such a thing. He loved his old toys too much to have sent them out on such a journey, from which they could never return.

Already the balloons were out of sight above his wood, and he was wondering where they would come to earth. He ran through the wood and out into the field beyond, but the balloons were before him. As they had risen higher, a stronger wind had caught them, and they were already past the wood and away above the fields. Already the blue one was almost part of the sky, and in a little while all three had disappeared.

The bold plan of the Brown Boy had failed, but Barrie never knew now when he might not be invaded. The stream that had seemed so broad and deep and strong no longer kept him secure. And somewhere, on his own side of the stream, those three soldiers of the Brown Boy had come to earth. By day he never thought of them, but sometimes, in the dusk of the wood, they came back to haunt him with an odd fear. They were only painted toys, but what if they had been real—three enemies who had come to earth somewhere behind him he could never know where, and now through that mysterious country of evening, were creeping back to find him in his wood? When the Brown Boy sent off his three balloons and his three soldiers on their forlorn hope, it was

no more than a piece of jolly audacity, a reckless *beau geste*. He did not know that he had let loose in Barrie's wood a fear which glided among the trees at night, dark and awesome as a flitting owl.

It was in answer to this fear that Barrie thought of the attack by water. He would make that further shore, where the Brown Boy lurked, a place always insecure, beset with anxieties. He spent a whole day in preparations, deep in his wood, while the Brown Boy ranged up and down the further shore firing unanswered stones into the trees. When the day was done Barrie's fleet was ready, six rough pieces of wood, roughly pointed at one end and rounded at the other. Each had a rough mast. That was all, but when they were put all together on the ground—still more when Barrie slipped down to the stream and moored them together in a hidden inlet made by a fallen branch—they looked undoubtedly like a fleet.

The same evening he filled one of his holes with stones, and in the rest he hid all his toy soldiers. He knew that he would never actually embark them, but he pretended that he would do it. That evening when

he went to bed he looked from his window down to that deeper darkness of the night which was his wood, and thrilled with delightful fear as he thought of the fleet at anchor behind the tree, and the armed men lying hidden in the earth.

Next morning he was early in the wood; visited all the holes, and filled his pocket with stones. Then in the shelter of Robin Hood he fired a few challenging shots. When the Brown Boy answered he crept down to the inlet where the fleet lay. All was ready. He took the six ships and thrust them as far he could out into the stream. They drifted down with it, but he hurried on before them and, by shooting stones into the water, began to drive them steadily across the stream. They were already half-way over before the Brown Boy realized what had happened, or knew that his shore was in danger. Then he burst through the bushes and his answering stones fell among the fleet, driving them back into mid-stream. One, top-heavy with its mast, was struck and turned right over, drifting unregarded back to Barrie's shore. The rest, with the stones beating the water round them until it leapt in little waves over

their decks, went down the stream and past the end of the wood. The first fleet had failed. But it was only the first. Fleet after fleet was launched, first from one side of the stream and then from the other, only to be held by the impassable stones in mid-stream. Fleet after fleet went down the stream, and beyond the wood, finding no shore. Once only Barrie drove one little ship right across while the Brown Boy was pursuing the main fleet down stream. She touched, and an eddy swung her in until she lay half hidden beneath the bank. The Brown Boy knew she had touched, but he never found her. To Barrie it gave unending delight to think of the men who had crept ashore from her, now lying somewhere in that alien wood and haunting the Brown Boy with fears of their attack. But whether the same thought troubled the Brown Boy he never knew.

So the long and joyous battle of the woods went on. The summer days were passing. The trees were still in full foliage, but when the wind moved among them there was now a dry rustle in their leaves. Dusk began to fall soon after tea, and with this early dusk came a sudden quickening coldness in the air like the ghost of spring. Barrie knew

that the end was near. Any day he might wake to find the great autumn winds shouting through his wood.

The end was very near, and one day, paying no heed to the Brown Boy, Barrie climbed again to the great arm of Robin Hood. There, for the first time for many weeks, he played the mournful game of Robin's grave, firing his stones among the tired leaves of the trees across the stream. The Brown Boy made no response, neither on that day nor on the day following, and Barrie wondered if he had altogether gone.

On the third day it rained heavily in the morning, and the rain left the air wonderfully clear. When Barrie went down to the wood in the afternoon he knew at once that the Brown Boy had come back. That feeling of loneliness was gone, but now, after the rain, the damp wood was full of the deep smell of autumn. The Brown Boy gave little sign, and only once or twice did he answer Barrie's shots. But Barrie saw him moving busily among the trees. The stream was running a little fuller and faster with the rain, but the trees stood so still that, as the dusk came down, they turned at once to unsubstantial shadows. Barrie waited and

wondered, feeling the sudden coldness of the autumn dusk stir his blood. It was too late to launch a fleet, but he longed to do something, to fill the wood with action and wake all the trees. He filled his pockets with stones and climbed in the darkness to the arm of Robin, loving the roughness of his bark. There he stood, looking across the stream at the tops of the trees which were like black waves against the sky. Then suddenly, up the stream where the wood began, the darkness burst into a great red fire. It was as if the sun, crimson from his setting, had suddenly leapt back into the quiet sky. It was as if all the stream were blazing. He stared until he heard a shout and the splash of stones in the water. Then he knew that, whatever it could be, it was some audacity of the Brown Boy. He tumbled down and ran through the wood. The light was in it, bringing his trees back to him out of the darkness. In the middle of the stream floated the scarlet fire, and on the further shore, his eyes and his bold square face all wildly lighted with excitement and the red glow, stood the Brown Boy, firing stone after stone into the stream. Then Barrie understood. The fire

was a great coloured light burning on a broad piece of wood, and the stones of the Brown Boy were driving it steadily across the stream—driving this fire-ship down upon his shore. Next moment his first stone struck the water.

So they fought their last battle on that autumn night all down the stream. The dazzling light lit it from bank to bank. The dark waters were a dull crimson, and the little waves from the stones jumped and flashed round the fire-ship. The stream carried it quickly. There was no time to follow it by running round behind the trees and Barrie went along the very edge of the bank. Beyond the red light he could see nothing. Its brilliance had destroyed everything else. The trees, except where the light touched them, had disappeared. The sky had gone. And beyond the desire to drive the fire-ship back upon the further shore, Barrie felt nothing. That desire possessed him. There was no room left for any other emotion. If all that wood of Robin Hood had suddenly come alive behind him, if all the shore had been lined with archers instead of trees, he would have felt a fierce delight, but neither wonder nor fear.

He scrambled and tore his way through the bushes, and swung himself under the branches of the trees. The loose earth of the bank broke beneath his feet, but he never noticed that half the time he was in the stream. The fire, as he could see now, came from a heap of powder on a shallow tin tied to the middle of the ship, and every now and then he heard the sharp ring of stone on metal as a shot struck it.

So the fire-ship, followed by that rain of stones, went on with the full current, rocking and dipping a little as it was struck, and the water splashed round it. Barrie could drive it no further across than the middle of the stream, but he kept it from coming any nearer to his own shore. Wet, torn, covered with mud, bleeding from scratches, but exalted, he drove that blazing invader down the dark stream. And on the further shore, where the trees looked pale and strange in the wild light, like people waked suddenly from sleep, he could see the Brown Boy, with his relentless, joyous eyes, standing squarely on the bank, and could hear the splash and thud of his stones as they struck the water or the ship.

They had passed Robin; they were more than half way through the wood, when suddenly came again that clear, loud ring of metal as a heavy stone struck the tin. The tin moved. The ship tilted. In a moment, that blazing light, which had seemed the one real thing in all the furious battle, was gone.

With the red light still dancing and burning inside his eyes, Barrie fought for a moment against the darkness, as one searches and fights for light when waking suddenly in an unfamiliar room. Then, above the trees, the pale sky came back, and he saw its reflection in the stream. He found that he was standing knee deep in the water and he shuddered at its cold, mysterious touch. Little by little all the faint, glimmering lights of the night, which that fierce fire had driven away, crept back like little ghosts among the trees. He felt suddenly how wet and torn and bruised he was. Everything was very still, and the night seemed very old. He wondered if that fight had really happened, or had he dreamed it? Or had he read of it? And where was the Brown Boy? That further shore was as still and mysterious as it had been before the Brown Boy came.

Then Barrie suddenly knew that he himself was only a little boy; that he was very lonely; and that he was afraid. He ran through the wood, following his familiar paths by instinct in the darkness. He ran, for the wood was haunted—haunted by the ghosts of his own games, by all the things with which he had peopled it, making it magical in the summer days. But now, under the chill touch of that autumn night, they were changed. They were his no longer. And he ran.

THE END.

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